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ABSTRACT

Noting that the evidence of families' influence on their children's school achievement is consistent, positive, and convincing, this report examines research on parent and community involvement and its impact on student achievement. Following an introduction, the first section of the report describes the methods used for selecting the studies; describes what the studies cover; provides a table showing the studies by topic area, by age and grade level, and by design type; and discusses limitations of the studies. The second section of the report synthesizes the studies' findings. This section also provides some pertinent definitions; lists recommendations to help educators put findings to practical use; and presents research findings related to three areas: (1) impact of parent and community involvement on student achievement; (2) effective strategies to connect schools, families, and community; and (3) parent and community organizing efforts to improve schools. The third section provides summaries of the 51 studies, conducted between 1993 and 2002, described in this report. The report finds that there is strong and steadily growing evidence that families can improve their children's academic performance in school and have a major impact on attendance and behavior. Children at risk of failure or poor performance can profit from the extra support that engaged families and communities provide. All students, but especially those in middle and high school, would benefit if schools supported parents in helping children at home and in guiding their educational career. The report's appendix provides a short history of the research in this field over the past 30 years. (Contains 96 references.) (KB)

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Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

A New Wave of Evidence

The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement

Annual Synthesis 2002

ED 474 521

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National Center for
FAMILY & COMMUNITY
Connections with
SCHOOLS

Anne T. Henderson
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Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

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The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement

Annual Synthesis 2002

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To the late Susan McAllister Swap

For more than 20 years, Sue worked tirelessly with both parents and educators, exploring how to develop closer, richer, deeper partnerships. In her last post, she directed with distinction the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning at Wheelock College. Her final book, *Developing Home-School Partnerships*, is a classic. Her family, her many friends, and her colleagues were deeply saddened by her untimely passing. We recall her fondly as a wonderful person with great warmth and many talents. Her contributions to the field and her inspiring leadership will long be remembered.

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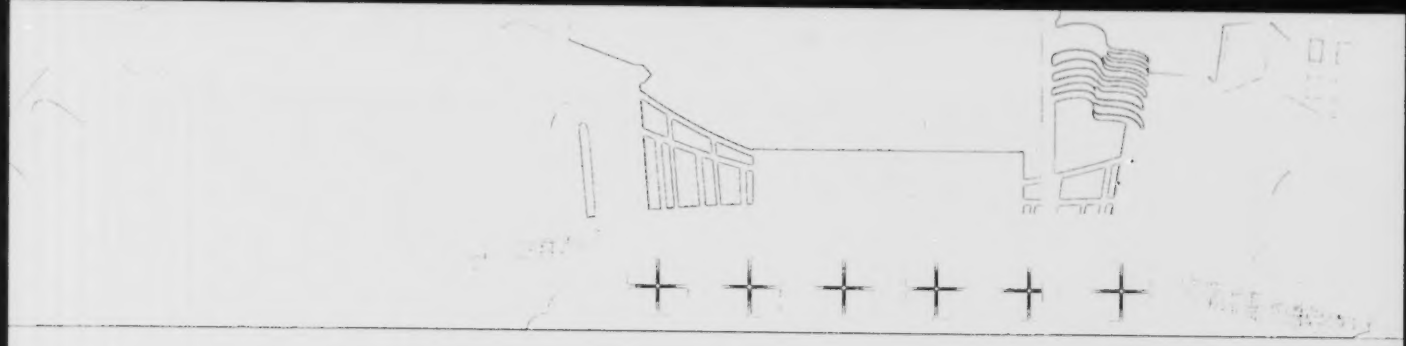


Acknowledgments

The idea for the *Evidence* publications first began in 1980 at the National Committee for Citizens in Education. Stan Salett had discovered a study that linked schools with PTAs to higher student achievement and wondered if there might be more relevant research. Bill Rioux thought something should be published about it if there were studies available, and Carl Marburger refused to testify or speak publicly about the research unless he had rock-solid information. Their beliefs led to the publication of *The Evidence Grows* (1981). Bill Rioux then insisted on two updates—*The Evidence Continues to Grow* (1987) and *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement* (1994). Chrissie Bamber guided the development and marketing of all early three editions.

This new *Evidence* publication is the result of a true collaborative effort. In 2000 the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement charged the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's new National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools (the Center) with doing an annual review and synthesis of current research about family and community connections. In early 2001 the Center's staff and steering committee began making plans to document the growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference in student achievement and success. About the same time, Karen L. Mapp, president of the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE), and Anne Henderson, senior consultant for the Institute for Education and Social Policy, who had written the earlier *Evidence* publications, began conversations about an updated version. As a member of the Center's steering committee, Karen Mapp knew about the Center's plans and suggested that the Center partner with IRE and Anne Henderson to do this. The Center agreed that a partnership made sense. So its staff began searching for, reading, analyzing, and annotating the research studies while Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp conceptualized and wrote this newest *Evidence* publication.

The Center staff—Amy Averett, Joan Buttram, Deborah Donnelly, Marilyn Fowler, Catherine Jordan, Margaret Myers, Evangelina Orozco, and Lacy Wood—all contributed significantly to the content as well, while Artie Stockton provided support and encouragement. At the Institute for Responsive Education, Carol Strickland helped summarize studies, and the rest of the IRE staff—Linda Peterson, Cathy Meza, Brendan McCaffery, and Rashaud Pettway—kept things running. Design consultants Jane Thurmond and Shaila Abdullah provided the design and layout services, Nancy Richey and Johanna Franke edited the final drafts, and Linda Webster prepared the index.

Several colleagues steered the project toward important studies, including their own work. We especially thank Janet Chrispeels, Reg Clark, and Joyce Epstein. Our review panel offered excellent advice, critical comment (sometimes very critical), and fine language. Don Davies chaired the panel and served as official reviewer, bringing his long and fruitful experience to bear on this work. Oliver Moles sent innumerable studies and offered careful comments throughout the process. Warlene Gary hosted an initial review panel meeting, gave useful advice about reaching practitioners, and helped arrange for the debut of *Evidence* at the National Education Association 2002 annual meeting in Dallas, Texas. Sue Ferguson, a steadfast friend to this work, provided ever-solid and practical advice. Norm Fruchter gave insight into the history of community organizing and, as always, put his finger on the weak spots.

The Center's steering committee members gave their advice and expertise to the development of this research synthesis: Howard Adelman, Center for Mental Health in Schools, University of California, Los Angeles; Kelly A. Butler, Parents for Public Schools, Inc.; Nancy Chavkin, Center for Children and Families, Southwest Texas State University; Pat Edwards, National Center for Community Education; Joyce Epstein, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University; Arnold Fege, Public Education Network; Ira Harkavy, Center for Community partnerships, University of Pennsylvania; Milbrey McLaughlin, Stanford Center on Adolescence, Stanford University; Maria R. Montecel, Intercultural Development Research Association; Terry Peterson, Network Resource for After-School and Community Education, University of South Carolina; Robert Pianta, University of Virginia; Estus Smith, Kettering Foundation; and Bobby Starnes, The National Center for Collaborative Teaching.

No acknowledgments would be complete without recognizing Paul Weckstein, Kathy Boundy, and Larry Searcy at the Center for Law and Education who continue to promote *Evidence* and make sure that Congress and federal agencies take this research into account as they develop education policy. They have also worked tirelessly to protect the rights of low-income children to attend public schools that are excellent, equitable, and open to their families' full participation.

Karen Mapp and Anne Henderson, the authors, want to thank their families—Basil Henderson, "who has endured through all four editions of *Evidence*, served as genial host for meetings, helped keep the stacks of paper from drifting into chaos, and offered judicious advice," and Donal Fox, "who gave his gift of music, his delicious gourmet cooking, and his constant love and support for Karen during the highs and lows of the writing process."

Finally, as all of the collaborators agree, support from families is what this report is all about.

Foreword by Don Davies

Many policymakers, administrators, and funders ask for evidence that parent involvement helps student achievement, including test scores. This report provides some useful answers.

If you are a new principal in a troubled inner-city school under orders from your superintendent to raise student test scores and involve parents, what should you do?

If I were you, I would look at the results of studies that show a convincing link between student achievement and various approaches to parent and community involvement. You could begin by checking out this new report where you'll discover several ideas that have been tested by researchers that might work in your school.

If you are a parent leader or a teacher concerned about improving the reading proficiency of the children in your school, what should you do?

If I were you, I would search for some tested ways that teachers and parents have worked together to foster improved reading skills and test scores. There has been much research in recent years that will provide ideas and guidance about what to do and what not to do. This report will save you a lot of time and be a reliable guide in your search.

If you are a legislator or school board member seeking ways to get more schools to work effectively with the families and community agencies to increase student achievement, what should you do?

If I were you, I would want to know about some promising approaches that might be aided by new policies or increased funding. This report provides a useful starting point with its narrative overview of the positive results of partnership programs.

I offer such advice with confidence, because this is a report that will be of practical value to many audiences if it is used thoughtfully. For example, the urban principal mentioned above could find at least 12 studies summarized that will suggest programs and approaches that he can consider for his school. A principal in a suburban or rural school could also find many applicable ideas. The recommendations are also oriented to action and may offer strategies that would be useful in many settings.

Other potential readers who can benefit from this publication include:

- Researchers: the methods described in the study summaries and the many recommendations for future research may be helpful to your work.

- Professors and graduate students in education programs: the case studies of effective practice may suggest some interesting joint projects with schools.
- Teachers, administrators, and school board members: many ideas in the program evaluations (such as parent workshops, interactive homework, and teacher outreach to families) and case studies (engaging families of diverse backgrounds in improving student achievement) may be adapted to your own schools. Even though the bulk of these studies focus on low-income students, the ideas about partnership and participation are important in all settings and for all students.
- Policymakers, including legislators and education department staff at the state and national levels: several studies have clear implications for executive or legislated efforts to encourage parent and community involvement. I especially recommend the studies of Title I and such programs as California Healthy Start, Early Head Start, Project EASE, and Community Schools.
- Funders of educational programs: the studies on community organizing may suggest some interesting funding strategies to increase support for your goals and some indicators for assessing progress.
- Journalists and writers concerned about school reform: you may discover that these findings will add depth to your articles and give insight into developments in your field.

In this report you will find an impressive increase in the quantity and quality of research in this area over the past two decades, which is encouraging. It will only be significant in contributing to school reform, however, if you pay serious attention to the evidence of the positive contributions that partnership programs can make to student achievement and other beneficial outcomes, and then act on what has been learned.

This report is important because it helps deliver and interpret the evidence. Many policymakers, administrators, and funders ask for evidence that parent involvement helps student achievement, including test scores. Many who ask the question are frustrated with the vague and sometimes confusing answers they get. This report provides some useful answers.

Two new features in the content of this report make it even more valuable for you than the three previous research summaries authored or co-authored by Anne Henderson, the first of which appeared almost 20 years ago. The first new feature is the emphasis on studies that describe successful practice in engaging families of all backgrounds in the challenging work of improving student achievement. Many educators say that they need practical, workable strategies for reaching out to families and sustaining their involvement. This report contains an entire section on collaborative approaches.

The second new feature in this report will give you a useful discussion and summary of the emergence of new approaches to community organizing aimed at school reform. The report documents how scores of community groups are organizing a power base

of parents and residents in low-income communities, with the goal of improving outcomes for all students, through increased funding and educational resources.

While there is not much recent quantitative research about this kind of parent and community participation, this publication offers you a good overview of studies that are mapping research development and points to some important studies and references.

The report has many important assets and few deficits.

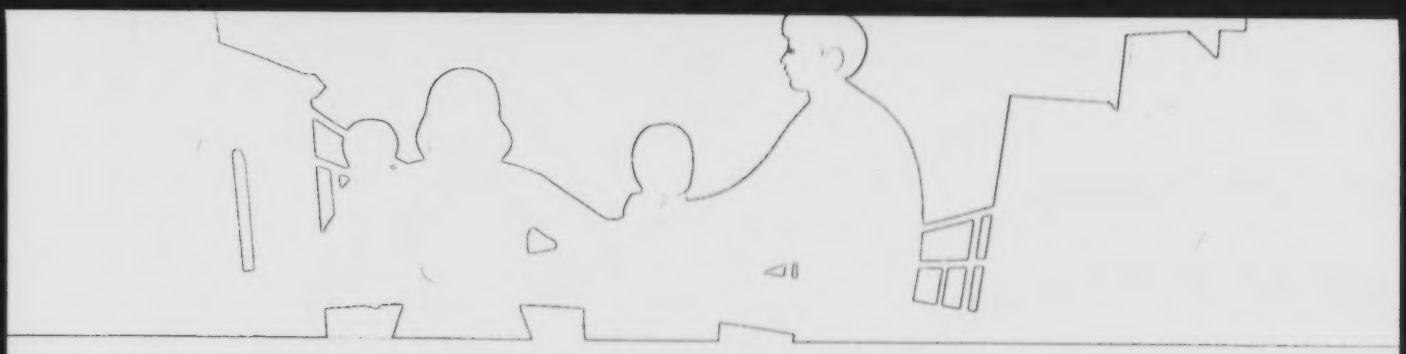
On the plus side, you will find the content is generally rich and helpful. The report is well organized and easy to use because of a good index and guides to the study summaries by topic and types of research. The overview and the summaries are well written and should be clear to practitioners who are not researchers. The authors used a careful process to select the studies to be included, and the selection represents a variety of topics and approaches.

On the downside, the report reflects the current limitations of this field of research. This means that there are few experimental or quasi-experimental studies and many of the studies represent quite small samples. If you are interested in the data, analyses, and explanations that underlie the conclusions of many of the studies, you will need to go beyond the summaries to the original reports, articles, or chapters.

All of you who are advocates of school, family, and community partnerships will be heartened by reaffirmation of the partnership idea that is provided in these pages. Those of you interested in research will also find new stimulation and ideas for filling the many gaps that remain to be filled in our knowledge.

I applaud the good efforts of Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory in undertaking and producing this important work.

—Don Davies
Founder, Institute for Responsive Education
Visiting Professor, Northeastern University
June 26, 2002



A New Wave of Evidence—In Short

The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. This fourth edition of *Evidence* confirms that the research continues to grow and build an ever-strengthening case. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.

When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement.

How are the many ways that families are engaged in their children's education related to achievement? Many studies found that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, were more likely to

- earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs.
- be promoted, pass their classes, and earn credits.
- attend school regularly.
- have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school.
- graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Several studies found that families of all income and education levels, and from all ethnic and cultural groups, are engaged in supporting their children's learning at home. White, middle-class families, however, tend to be more involved at school. Supporting more involvement at school from all parents may be an important strategy for addressing the achievement gap.

Do programs and special efforts to engage families make a difference?

Yes, several studies found that they do. For example, teacher outreach to parents was related to strong and consistent gains in student performance in both reading and math. The effective outreach practices included meeting face to face, sending materials home, and keeping in touch about progress. Workshops for parents on helping their children at home were linked to higher reading and math scores. Schools with highly rated partnership programs made greater gains on state tests than schools with lower-rated programs.

How do higher performing schools engage families and community?

Schools that succeed in engaging families from very diverse backgrounds share three key practices. They

- focus on building trusting collaborative relationships among teachers, families, and community members.
- recognize, respect, and address families' needs, as well as class and cultural difference.
- embrace a philosophy of partnership where power and responsibility are shared.

What is the impact of parent and community organizing on improving schools?

This type of engagement is based outside schools and led by parents and community members, and it is growing nationwide. These efforts are aimed at schools that are low performing. Strategies of community organizing are different from traditional parent involvement and are openly focused on building low-income families' power and political skills to hold schools accountable for results.

A new group of studies found that community organizing contributed to these changes in schools:

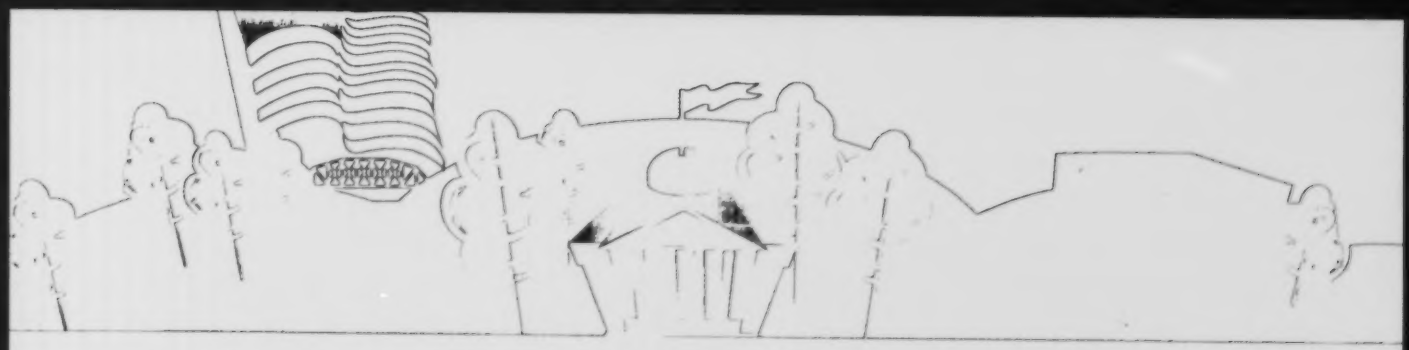
- Upgraded school facilities.
- Improved school leadership and staffing.
- Higher-quality learning programs for students.
- New resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum.
- New funding for after-school programs and family supports.

Summing up

When parents talk to their children about school, expect them to do well, help them plan for college, and make sure that out-of-school activities are constructive, their children do better in school. When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, students make greater gains. When schools build partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement. And when families and communities organize to hold poorly performing schools accountable, studies suggest that school districts make positive changes in policy, practice, and resources.

How can we put these findings into action?

- Recognize that all parents—regardless of income, education, or cultural background—are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well.
- Design programs that will support families to guide their children's learning, from preschool through high school.
- Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families.
- Link efforts to engage families, whether based at school or in the community, to student learning.
- Build families' social and political connections.
- Focus efforts to engage families and community members on developing trusting and respectful relationships.
- Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, school staff, and community members understand that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise.
- Build strong connections between schools and community organizations.
- Include families in all strategies to reduce the achievement gap among white, middle-class students and low-income students and students of color.



Introduction

This publication examines parent and community connections with schools and their impact on student achievement.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) of the State of Washington recently published a literature review of 20 studies that examined the common characteristics of high-performing schools. These studies include several U.S. Department of Education studies, including *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High Performing, High Poverty Urban Elementary Schools* (Mayer, D. P., Mullens, J. E., & Moore, M. T., 2000), and *Monitoring School Quality: An Indicators Report* (Charles A. Dana Center, 1999). Their research found that high-performing schools tend to have a combination of many characteristics, which were narrowed into these nine areas:

1. A clear and shared focus.
2. High standards and expectations for all students.
3. Effective school leadership.
4. High levels of collaboration and communication.
5. Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with state standards.
6. Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning.
7. Focused professional development.
8. A supportive learning environment.
9. High levels of parent and community involvement.

The purpose of this publication, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, is to examine one of these identified characteristics of high-performing schools: parent and community involvement and its role in impacting on student achievement. This publication is the fourth in the series of *Evidence* publications authored or co-authored by Anne Henderson. It is also the second in the series of publications by SEDL's National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools (hereinafter referred to as the Center).

The Center's first publication, *Emerging Issues in School, Family, and Community Connections*, is a research synthesis created to identify "key issues that must be addressed if research is to assist schools, families, and communities in working together to nurture high standards and academic success for all children" (p. 1). For *Emerging Issues*, SEDL staff reviewed a broad body of literature on the process and impact of school, family, and community connections. This body of literature reviewed is captured in full in an online, searchable annotated bibliography database, *The*

Connection Collection: School-Family-Community Publications Database (2002) available at www.sedl.org/connections/resources/. (See "About the Studies" section, p. 13, for information about how we selected the studies.)

Although we tried to cover a vast range of topics, certain areas were deemed too important to cover briefly in this publication. These topics will be treated separately in future annual research syntheses published by the Center. The 2003 synthesis will focus on connecting families from diverse backgrounds with schools. In future years the Center will take a closer look at the involvement of community organizations in the process of transforming schools into high-performing learning communities and connecting families and schools to support successful transitions through the education system.

We tried to write in reader-friendly language free of educational jargon. We also tried to explain and demystify some of the more complex statistical methods and results used in the research studies.

Some Definitions

Throughout this report, we frequently use the words "family" or "families" in place of "parent" or "parents." We want to recognize that all family members—siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and "fictive kin" who may be friends or neighbors—often contribute in significant ways to children's education and development. If a study uses the terms "parent" or "parents," we stick to the terminology used by the researchers.

For the purposes of this report, we use the terms "connection" and "involvement" interchangeably.

By "community" we mean:

- the neighborhood or the places around the school.
- local residents, who live in the area and may or may not have children in the school, but have an interest in the school.
- local groups that are based in the neighborhood.

How This Report Is Organized

We have tried to organize this report in a way that will be easy to navigate. Here is a brief guide to what is in the report.

About the Studies

The section describes the methods used for selecting the studies, describes what the studies cover, and provides a table showing the studies by topic area, by age and grade level, and by design type (Tables 1–3, pp. 15–17). Limitations of the studies are indicated.

Synthesis of Research Studies

The first section of the synthesis sums up the findings briefly and provides some definitions. Following that, the studies are divided into three categories:

- Impact of Parent and Community Involvement on Student Achievement;
- Effective Strategies to Connect Schools, Families, and Community; and
- Parent and Community Organizing Efforts to Improve Schools.

The next section lists a series of recommendations designed to help people put these findings into use in a practical way, followed by the conclusion.

The Research Studies

This section provides summaries of the 51 studies described in this report.

Appendix: Looking Back—A Brief History and Key Studies, 1974–95

Because the studies in this report are all recent (1993–2002), we also include a short history of the research in this field for the past 30 years. Summaries of key studies mentioned in the brief history are also included in this section. A review of these studies with longer summaries is available in the previous edition, *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement* (1994), by Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla. It can be obtained from the Center for Law and Education in Washington, D.C., at www.cleweb.org.

About the Authors and Publisher

More information about the writers of this report and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory is available in this section.

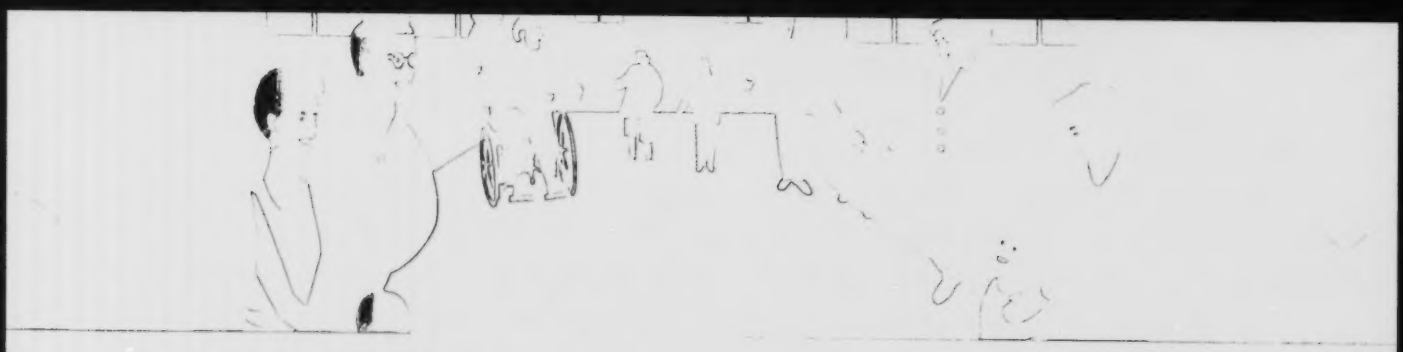
References

This section lists works cited.

Index

This report has a full index to help the reader find studies and topics of interest.

We hope that this report will be a useful tool for educators, researchers, policymakers, funders, community leaders, and others interested in the impact of school, family, and community connections on children's learning.



About the Studies

How We Selected the Studies

This review examines the growing evidence that family and community connections with schools make a difference in student success. It is the second in a series from the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). The first publication in the series was *Emerging Issues in School, Family, and Community Connections*. For *Emerging Issues*, SEDL staff reviewed a broad body of recent literature (published since 1995, with the exception of a few seminal studies) on the process and impact of school, family, and community connections. An annotated bibliography of more than 200 research studies, conceptual or theoretical pieces, practice and policy-oriented works, and literature reviews is available as an online, searchable database titled *The Connection Collection* (2002) on the SEDL Web site at www.sedl.org/connections/resources/.

Finally, we included studies that attempted to break new ground, either in defining student outcomes, ways that families and community members were engaged, or theories of change.

For *A New Wave of Evidence*, SEDL staff identified about 80 research studies and literature reviews out of the documents they had reviewed. SEDL staff also did a further search in such major databases as the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Education Abstracts. This subgroup of studies focuses on the influence of family and community involvement on student academic achievement and other outcomes. (See the "Synthesis of Research Studies" section on p. 21 of this report for more detail on how these studies defined student achievement and family involvement.) In addition, we asked colleagues in the field to recommend other studies and send us copies of their research.

All studies were reviewed to make sure they met these standards:

1. Sound methodology: experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational design with statistical controls. For qualitative studies, such as case studies, we looked for sound theory, objective observation, and thorough design.
2. Study findings that matched the data collected and conclusions that were consistent with the findings.

Our choices were, of course, limited to what was available, and published in the past eight or nine years. In choosing the 51 studies that were ultimately included, we looked for a range of studies that covered:

- early childhood through high school;
- all regions of the country;

- diverse populations (income, race/ethnicity, educational level, and occupation);
- community as well as parent and family involvement;
- a variety of methods, both quantitative and qualitative; and
- different sources of data (survey research, evaluations, case studies, experimental and quasi-experimental studies, and research reviews).

Finally, we included studies that attempted to break new ground, either in defining student outcomes, ways that families and community members were engaged, or theories of change. In the interest of focus and scale, we did not include studies on special education, educational policy, parent choice, or business partnerships. These topics will be covered in later reports.

What the Studies Cover

Tables 1–3 (pp. 15–17) group the studies by design type, general topic, and age and grade level. This grouping will help the reader find studies more easily and will display the many topics, methods, and grade levels covered. In classifying the studies by methods, we used the typology of empirical studies presented in Amy Baker and Laura Soden's review (1997).

- Pre-experimental studies: no comparison group, or the comparison group not randomly assigned and assessed at pretest.
- Quasi-experimental studies: no pretest comparability between treatment and comparison families (for example, comparing treatment students with students from the year before or in a different class).
- Ex post facto and correlational studies: level of involvement is naturally occurring, not randomly assigned. Parent involvement is a continuous variable that is related to a continuous dependent variable, without an intervention.
- Experimental studies: families are assigned to a treatment and control group at random, compared at pretest, received an intervention or not, then tested after the intervention.

Following the tables, a section on the limitations of this research provides more detailed standards for experimental studies.

Table 1. Studies by General Topic

Evaluations of Programs and Interventions

Baker et al. (1998) (HIPPY)
Balli et al. (1998) (Interactive Math Homework)
Chrispeels and Rivero (2000) (PIQE)
Dryfoos (2000) (Community Schools)
Epstein, Simon, and Salinas (1997) (TIPS/Writing)
Epstein et al. (1997) (Partnership Initiative)
Invernizzi et al. (1997) (Book Buddies)
Jordan et al. (2000) (Project EASE)
Kagitcibasi et al. (2001) (HIPPY)
Mathematica (2001) (Early Head Start)
Moore (1998) (Chicago Local School Councils)
Newman (1995) (California Healthy Start)
Rubenstein and Wodatch (2000) (Title I)
Shaver and Walls (1998) (Title I Parent Workshops)
Starkey and Klein (2000) (Head Start Math)
Van Voorhis (2001) (TIPS/Science)
Wang et al. (1995) (Community for Learning)
Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001) (Standards-based Practices)
Wilson and Corbett (2000) (CIPL)

Family Activities at Home vs. at School

Catsambis (1998)
Gutman and Midgley (2000)
Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996)
Izzo et al. (1999)
Shumow and Lomax (2001)
Shumow and Miller (2001)
Williams (1998)

Home-School Interactions

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)
Mapp (2002)
Marcon (1999)
Miedel and Reynolds (1999)
Sanders et al. (1999)
Sanders and Harvey (2000)
Simon (2000)
Smrekar et al. (2001)

Family Processes and Time Use

Clark (1993)
Clark (2002)
Fan and Chen (1999)
Keith and Keith (1993)
Trusty (1999)

Community Effects

Clark (2002)*
Dryfoos (2000)*
Invernizzi et al. (1997)*
Newman (1995)*
Sanders and Herting (2000)

Culture and Class

Chrispeels and Rivero (2000)*
Lareau and Horvat (1999)
López (2001)
Peña (2000)
Scribner et al. (1999)

Community Organizing and Constituency Building

Gold et al. (2002)
Jacobs and Hirota (in press)
Mediratta and Fruchter (2001)
Shirley (1997)
Wilson and Corbett (2000)*

Literature Reviews

Baker and Soden (1997)
Downey (2002)
Epstein and Sanders (2000)
Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)*

*Where a study appears under more than one topic, the second mention is indicated by an asterisk.

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Table 2. Studies by Age and Grade Level

Early Childhood and Preschool

Baker et al.
Jordan et al.
Kagitcibasi et al.
Marcon
Mathematica
Miedel and Reynolds (preschool–8)
Starkey and Klein

Elementary School (grades K–5)

Balli et al. (6)
Chrispeels and Rivero
Clark 1993
Epstein et al.
Gutman and Midgley (5–6)
Invernizzi et al. (1–3)
Izzo et al. (K–3)
Lareau and Horvat (3)
Mapp
Moore
Peña
Sanders and Harvey
Shaver and Walls (2–8)
Wang et al. (K–8)
Westat and Policy Studies Associates (3–5)

Middle and High School (grades 6–12)

Catsambis (8–12)
Epstein, Simon, and Salinas (6–8)
Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (8)
Keith and Keith (8)
López
Rubenstein and Wodatch
Sanders et al. (9–12)
Sanders and Herting (8)
Shumow and Lomax (4–12)
Shumow and Miller (7–8)
Simon
Smrekar et al.
Trusty (8–college)
Van Voorhis (6–8)
Williams (6–8)

All Ages

Clark (2002)
Dryfoos
Fan and Chen
Gold et al.
Jacobs and Hirota
Mediratta and Fruchter
Newman
Scribner et al.
Shirley
Wilson and Corbett

*This table does not include the literature reviews.

Table 3. Studies by Design Type

Literature Reviews Baker and Soden (1997) Downey (2002) Dryfoos (2000) Epstein and Sanders (2000) Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)	**Correlational Studies** Catsambis (1998) Clark (1993) Clark (2002) Epstein, Clark, Salinas, and Sanders (1997) Fan and Chen (1999) Gutman and Midgley (2000) Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) Izzo et al. (1999) Keith and Keith (1993) Marcon (1999) Miedel and Reynolds (1999) Moore (1998) Sanders et al. (1999) Sanders and Herting (2000) Shumow and Lomax (2001) Shumow and Miller (2001) Simon (2000) Trusty (1999) Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001) Williams (1998)
Reports based on Interviews and Site Visits Gold, Simon, and Brown (2002) Jacobs and Hirota (in press) Mediratta and Fruchter (2001) Newman (1995) Wilson and Corbett (2000)	
Descriptive Case Studies Lareau and Horvat (1999) López (2001) Mapp (2002) Peña (2000) Rubenstein and Wodatch (2000) Sanders and Harvey (2000) Scribner et al. (1999) Shirley (1997) Smrekar et al. (2001)	**Quasi-experimental Studies** Jordan et al. (2000) Shaver and Walls (1998) Van Voorhis (2001)
Pre-experimental Studies Chrispeels and Rivero (2000) Epstein, Simon, and Salinas (1997) Invernizzi et al. (1997) Wang, Oates, and Weishew (1995)	**Experimental Studies** Baker et al. (1998) Balli et al. (1998) Kagitcibasi et al. (2001) Mathematica (2001) Starkey and Klein (2000)

Note: This table uses the typology from Baker and Soden's literature review (1997).

Limitations of the Research

We feel confident in making a strong statement about the benefits of school, family, and community connections. We also feel confident that the studies we have selected were carefully done and thoughtfully interpreted. However, the research in this field shares many of the limitations found in other areas of educational research. Certainly, there are not enough experimental or quasi-experimental studies. We included the few we found.

There is also not enough long-term research because of the limits of funding for such ambitious work. Many studies have small samples, while others depend on self-reports rather than independent verification. Many conclusions have to be carefully hedged because little can be said about cause and effect. Some studies have mixed, ambiguous, or incomplete findings and conclusions.

Nevertheless, we feel that the findings from the research reviewed here can be useful to our country's efforts to improve the policies and practices of schools. Some more detailed comments about the limitations follow.

1. Studies of programs. In their critique of research on early childhood programs, Karl White and his colleagues (1992) point out that few evaluation studies are based on rigorous standards for validity. (See White et al. in Appendix, p. 216.) These standards for experimental studies include:

- Children to be studied are assigned at random either to a treatment or a control group.
- The two groups are comparable in terms of family background. This is verified by interviews with families.
- The two groups stay together from the beginning to the end of the study.
- The interventions are described in detail, and are fully carried out.
- Trained testers assess the students in a neutral place.

Only a few studies in this review, all of programs or interventions, met these standards. These were conducted on Early Head Start, Head Start Family Math, and the HIPPY program (Mathematica et al., Starkey and Klein, and Baker et al.). The studies on Project EASE, Interactive Math Homework, and TIPS Science were quasi-experimental because the control groups were not chosen by random selection (Jordan et al., Balli et al., Van Voorhis). Most other studies about the effects of parent involvement on student achievement used a correlational method, with statistical controls (Clark, 2002; Clark, 1993; Epstein, Simon, and Salinas; Invernizzi et al.; Marcon; Moore; Shaver and Walls; and Westat/Policy Studies Associates). The report by Dryfoos reviewed findings from studies done by others, but did not critique their methods.

The correlational studies compared children of more highly involved parents with children of less involved parents, rather than with a control group. Neither group of children was chosen by random assignment. The researchers used statistical methods to analyze the relationship between level of involvement and improved student outcomes. Then they introduced controls for family income, occupation, and education levels

to see if the effects could be explained by other factors. This method is considered reliable, but it may miss or fail to measure some factors that could account for the findings.

2. Studies using survey data. Many studies, and all on middle and high school students, use large databases such as the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS). These studies use correlational methods. In interpreting the findings, we need to be aware of some limitations in this type of research.

- **NELS:88 and other survey data about parent involvement are based almost entirely on what parents, students, and educators report in structured interviews or questionnaires.** There was no way in the data collection design to confirm that reported behavior matched real behavior. NELS:88, for example, covers 25,000 students. A few studies use a data source that includes information from open-ended interviews with a small subsample of parents or students (Miedel and Reynolds, Gutman and Midgley, Sanders and Herting, Shumow and Miller). This offers more information but it still is self-reported. Three studies cross-checked parent responses with student and teacher reports (Keith and Keith, Miedel and Reynolds, Trusty). Jerry Trusty found that students' reports about their parents' involvement had the strongest effects. In other words, the more students perceive their family's involvement and support, the better they tend to do in school.

- **Studies using survey data are looking after the fact. They ask how much involvement has happened or is happening. That approach can make what is called "directionality" hard to determine.** This is a problem with all studies that collect data at one point in time. In these studies, we can see that more parent involvement and higher achievement are related in some areas. But which came first? Perhaps higher-achieving children attract more parent involvement, rather than the other way around. Some studies attempted to address this issue by controlling for prior achievement.

  Miedel and Reynolds checked to see if children's kindergarten readiness scores were more powerful than parent involvement in predicting later achievement. They found that the number of activities parents took part in during the early years of schooling had an effect on eighth-grade achievement that was independent of readiness. Controlling for achievement, Catsambis found that students with both low and high grades seemed to benefit from discussions about school and planning for college with their families. In other words, parent involvement is related to achievement gains for both high- and low-achieving students.

- **Survey data tend to cover many topics, but without probing them deeply. They don't tell us why parents, students, or teachers responded the way they did—or what they might like us to know.** The relationships among parents, teachers, and students are complex and influenced by many factors. From survey research, we can only conjecture what is going on. As Baker and Soden put it in their review (1997):

  > Closed-ended self-report surveys cannot fully capture the dynamic transactional nature of parents' involvement in their children's education. Many of these

processes could better be explored through open-ended and observational techniques that would produce rich data, shed light on complex processes, and generate new hypotheses. (p. 15)

How to Get Copies of the Studies

Many of the studies covered in this overview are available through the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) system. If the study summary includes a listing of ED or EJ, followed by a six-digit number, the publication is indexed in ERIC. The ERIC numbers are the unique identifiers assigned to each ERIC entry. For more information about ERIC, visit the Web site at www.eric.ed.gov.

ED Numbers. ERIC numbers that begin with "ED" (e.g., ED 435484) refer to documents indexed in ERIC. You can use the ED number to find the resource in the ERIC database online at www.eric.ed.gov. Although you can't read the whole document online, you can read an abstract or summary. Most documents can be ordered from the ERIC document reproduction service at www.edrs.com. Choose from the following formats: downloadable PDF file, a print copy, or microfiche.

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EJ Numbers. ERIC numbers that begin with "EJ" (e.g., EJ 674533) refer to journal articles. The least-expensive way to obtain a full copy is to consult a library. If your local library does not subscribe to a particular journal, or have what is called "full-text electronic access" to that journal, you can get copies through interlibrary loan (ILL). For a fee, there are article reproduction services that will provide a copy. Ask your library to suggest one.

Synthesis of Research Studies

How the Studies Define Family Involvement and Student Achievement

In this review, we look at 51 recent studies, all but two published from 1995 to 2002. Every one sheds some light on the relationship between parent involvement and, in some cases, community involvement and improved student achievement.

In this review, we look at 51 recent studies, all but two published from 1995 to 2002. Every one sheds some light on the relationship between parent involvement and, in some cases, community involvement and improved student achievement. Together they cover children and youth of all ages, from birth through high school and into the postsecondary years. These studies also cover a wide range of perspectives and approaches.

Some studies evaluate programs that are designed to engage families in improving achievement, while others look at high-performing schools or students to study how parent involvement may have contributed. Several studies analyze long-term databases drawn from large-scale surveys of families, students, and educators, while others focus closely on how families and educators interact in a single setting.

In general, the studies fall into three broad categories:

1. **Studies on the impact of family and community involvement on student achievement.**
2. **Studies on effective strategies to connect schools, families, and community.**
3. **Studies on parent and community organizing efforts to improve schools.** These studies comprise a new, still developing arena of research that forecasts some interesting trends in both research and practice.

The next sections will cover the findings for each category, make some recommendations for putting these findings into action, and draw a brief conclusion. Before we describe this research in more detail, let's look at how the studies define parent involvement and student achievement.

How do the studies define parent involvement? Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the Center on Family, School, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University, have developed a useful framework of six types of parent involvement. Table 4, adapted from the Sophia Catsambis study (1998), is based on this work. It shows how parent involvement is frequently broken down and defined. Many researchers used some variation of this framework.

Table 4. Six Types of Parent Involvement for Grades 8 and 12

Type of Involvement	In Grade 8	In Grade 12
Parenting	– Expressing expectations about student's education – Limiting television viewing – Supervising time use and behavior	– Discussing interests, issues, and studies at school – Doing things together (shopping, vacations, movies, meals) – Supervising behavior – Knowing what courses student is taking – Supervising academic work
Communicating	– Parent-initiated contacts about academic performance – School-initiated contacts about student's academic program (courses, placement)	– School-initiated contacts about academic performance – Parent-initiated contacts on student's academic program – Parent-school contacts on post-secondary plans
Supporting school	Volunteering at school and fund-raising	Volunteering at school and attending school activities
Learning at home	– Academic lessons outside school – Music or dance lessons – Discussions about school and plans for future	– Encouraging college – Encouraging high school graduation – Learning about postsecondary education – Taking on private educational expenses
Decision making	Taking part in parent organization	Taking part in parent organization
Collaborating with community	– Using community learning resources (like museum visits) – Taking part in community groups (scouts, sports)	Communicating parent-to-parent

Definitions of parent involvement in elementary school were similar to those given in the table for grade 8. Some researchers condensed this list into parent involvement at home and at school, using definitions like these:

- Engaging in learning activities at home, including helping with reading skills and checking homework.
- Supervising children and monitoring how they spend their time out of school
- Talking about school and what children are learning.
- Attending school events, going to parent-teacher conferences, meeting with teachers, and volunteering in the classroom or school.

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In their analysis of middle grades achievement, for example, Esther Ho Sui-Chu and Douglas Willms (1996) identified four basic types of involvement. Two are based at home, two at school:

1. Discussing school activities.
2. Monitoring out-of-school activities.
3. Contacts with school staff.
4. Volunteering and attending parent-teacher conferences and other school events.

Rebecca Marcon (1999) put an interesting spin on this distinction in her study. She grouped involvement by whether parents were active and "in charge," or passive and "reacting to the school." Deborah Bugg Williams (1998) used an educational productivity model based on Herbert Walberg's research (1984):

- Parent effort: contacts with school, expectations of student, and discussions with student.
- Instructional support: how much time student spends learning outside school.
- Environmental support: learning at home, quality of school (parent rating), knowing student's friends, and out-of-school activities.

The studies that consider community-based initiatives to improve schools take into account the social and political context that leads to poor performance. These movements for better schools take a political approach, demanding more resources, higher teacher quality, smaller schools, and new programs to improve student achievement. Underway mainly in urban areas, these parent and community-driven efforts are focused on holding the school system accountable for low student performance.

How do the studies define student achievement? The studies were fairly uniform in how they defined and measured student academic achievement. Measures of student achievement and other outcomes most commonly used were:

- For young children: teacher ratings (using instruments like the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales) of school adjustment, vocabulary, reading and language skills, social and motor skills.
- For school-age children: report card grades, grade point averages, enrollment in advanced classes, and standardized test scores.
- Attendance, staying in school, and being promoted to the next grade.
- Improved behavior and healthy development (for example, less substance abuse and disruptive behavior).

Studies on the Impact of Parent and Community Involvement on Student Achievement

From these studies, one overarching conclusion has emerged:

It takes more than engaged parents to produce high student achievement.

> Taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students at all ages. Although there is less research on the effects of community involvement, it also suggests benefits for schools, families, and students, including improved achievement and behavior.

Among the studies reviewed here, the benefits for students include

- higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales,
- enrollment in more challenging academic programs,
- more classes passed and credits earned,
- better attendance,
- improved behavior at home and at school, and
- better social skills and adaptation to school.

Contributing to this conclusion are several key findings that clarify and deepen our understanding. Before presenting them, however, we would like to sound a caution. As we point out in the introduction, it takes more than engaged parents to produce high student achievement. Many studies of high-performing schools identify several key characteristics associated with improvement. These include high standards and expectations for all students and curriculum, as well as instruction and assessments aligned with those standards. They also include effective leadership, frequent monitoring of teaching and learning, focused professional development, and high levels of parent and community involvement.

As expected, while the effect sizes in many of these studies are statistically significant, they are small to moderate. A number of studies found that some forms of parent involvement with the school (communications with school, volunteering, attending school events, parent-parent connections) appeared to have little effect on student achievement, especially in high school. A few found that parent involvement with homework and parent-initiated contacts with school were negatively related to grades and test scores (Catsambis, 1998; Fan and Chen, 1999; Izzo et al., 1999; Shumow and Miller, 2001).

What does this mean? Does helping children with school work, monitoring their behavior, or contacting the school impel them to get lower grades and scores? Are there other factors that influence both achievement and parent intervention? Do parents offer more guidance to children who are struggling? In her study of 13,500 families, Sophia Catsambis found that certain forms of involvement (contacting the school, encouraging teens to graduate from high school rather than go to college, and supervising behavior) were associated with lower student achievement. When she controlled for problem

behavior (coming to school late or unprepared, cutting classes), the negative effects disappeared.

Lee Shumow and Joe Miller (2001) found that at-home involvement is related to students' positive attitudes toward school but negatively related to grades and test scores. They interpreted their findings to mean that parents of struggling students provide more help at home than parents of successful students. In their analysis of data from 25 studies, Xitao Fan and Michael Chen (1999) found a similar pattern. They also suggest that parents impose more controls when children are not doing well. These studies suggest that parents whose children have academic or behavior problems tend to supervise them more and seek help from the school.

The Gutman and Midgley (2000) study of fifth- and sixth-grade students from 62 families in a Michigan district found that parent involvement as a single variable did not appear to be related to students' grades. It is interesting, however, that their definition of parent involvement (talking to students about school, checking homework, attending events and volunteering) contains factors that Catsambis and others found were not significantly related to achievement.

Having expressed these cautions, let's take a closer look at the findings on the relationship between parent and family engagement and improvements in student outcomes.

Key Finding

Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement.

Almost all these programs are aimed at families with younger children, from birth through kindergarten, then in elementary school. Two studies, developed by Joyce Epstein and her colleagues, examine Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) in middle school. TIPS was originally designed for elementary schools, but now includes designs for seventh and eighth grades. The studies on parent involvement for middle and high school students look at family processes and family-school interactions and are drawn mostly from survey research. These findings are presented under the next set of findings.

Birth through preschool. Early Head Start is a federal program that serves low-income families with infants and toddlers. Either through home visits or classes at a central location, mothers learn ways to stimulate their children's mental, physical, and emotional development at home. The program includes early education, parenting education, health services, and family support services. In an experimental study, Mathematica Policy Research and the Center for Children and Families at Columbia University (2001) examined initial results from this new program.

The research team looked at programs in 17 sites, studying about 3,000 children and their families. At each site, children were randomly assigned to the program or to a control group.

When they were two years old, the Early Head Start children scored higher on cognitive development scales, used more words, and spoke in more complex sentences than control-group children. The program families were also more likely to support their children's development and literacy skills than families of control-group children.

Project EASE (Early Access to Success in Education) is a literacy program in Minnesota that offers home and school activities for kindergartners and their families. In sessions at school, trained parent educators coach mothers in developing literacy skills. Then teachers send home book-related activities for parents to do with their children. Gail Jordan, Catherine Snow, and Michelle Porche (2000) looked at the project in four lower-income schools in a mostly middle-class district. Over one year, the students in Project EASE made significantly greater gains on language scores than children in a control group. The more activities a family completed, the higher their students' gains. Children who started out with the lowest skills gained the most.

HIPPY, the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, is a program with similar goals but delivered entirely through home visits. It is aimed at poor and immigrant families with four- and five-year-old children. During biweekly home visits, a trained paraprofessional models the lesson through role-play. Mothers read books to their children, then engage them in learning activities. The home visitors, recruited from backgrounds similar to their assigned families, are trained and supervised by professional HIPPY coordinators.

Amy Baker, Chaya Piotrkowski, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn (1998) examined outcomes for 182 HIPPY program and control-group children in two cohorts in a New York school district. The study extended through the two-year program and followed up one year later, at the end of first grade. The results were mixed. For Cohort I, the researchers found positive gains in the HIPPY children's school performance, both during the program and in first grade, compared with the control group. For Cohort II, there were no significant differences between the HIPPY and control children.

Baker and her colleagues concluded that these results are promising but tentative. Programs that develop young children's learning skills are important because children who start out as high performers tend to remain that way, while children who have a poor start tend to remain poor students. From their analysis of the data, the researchers concluded that "we may be seeing naturally occurring variations on the effects of programs within communities. . . . Our findings also alert us to the importance of replication studies and caution us about generalizing positive or negative results from single-sample, single-site evaluations" (p. 584). They call for further research on HIPPY.

For 10 years, a team of researchers in Turkey studied a program based on HIPPY (Kagitcibasi et al., 2001). In an experimental study, children were randomly assigned to the HIPPY program or to three other settings. The four programs or settings studied were

- home care provided by mothers with training, home visits, and discussion groups (HIPPY);
- home care provided by mothers with no support;

- childcare without education; and
- educational nursery schools.

In the short term, children in both HIPPY and nursery school settings made greater progress than children in the other two groups. Seven years after completing the programs, however, the HIPPY children showed greater gains than children in the other groups, including those who had gone to nursery school. They earned higher scores in reading and math and in social development. They also were more likely to stay in school. As with the Baker study, these results should be treated with caution, for there may be unidentified cultural differences that influenced the outcomes.

Studies of a program to develop math skills in Head Start children found more consistent results. Prentice Starkey and Alice Klein (2000) did two experimental studies of a four-month intervention. At two sites in the San Francisco area, one serving African-American families and the other Latino families, staff gave classes for mothers and children and loaned math activity kits to use at home. About 30 families were involved at each site. Half were randomly assigned to the program, and half to a control group. In both sites, the researchers found that parents were willing and able to work with their children on math when given training and materials. The children in both programs developed greater math knowledge and skills than the control-group children.

Elementary and middle school. A study of standards-based reform practices done by Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001) for the U.S. Department of Education looked at their impact on student achievement in 71 Title I elementary schools. (Title I is the largest federal program for elementary and secondary education. It is aimed at improving the academic skills of low-income students.) The study used an advanced statistical method to analyze the relationship between student test scores and these practices:

- Visibility of standards and assessments.
- Basic or advanced teaching techniques.
- Teacher preparation and teachers' skills in math instruction.
- High or low ratings (by teachers) of professional development.
- Focus on assessment and accountability.
- District standards policies.
- Outreach to parents.

Outreach to parents measured how much teachers communicated with parents of low-achieving students through

- meeting face to face.
- sending materials on ways to help their child at home.
- telephoning both routinely and when their child was having problems.

The researchers found that teacher outreach to parents of low-performing students was related to improved student achievement in both reading and math. Of the eight other practices studied, only professional development that was highly rated by teachers was as consistently linked to student gains in both subjects. In schools where teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents, test scores grew at a rate 40 percent higher than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach.

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Does offering workshops at school enhance parents' skills to help their children? Ann Shaver and Richard Walls (1998) looked at the impact of school-based parent workshops on the achievement of 335 Title I students in nine schools in a West Virginia district. In addition to attending sessions designed to their interests, parents received learning packets in reading and math, as well as training in how to use them. The students' gains were compared with pretest scores, then measured against average national gains, on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. The researchers found that

- students with more highly involved parents were more likely to gain in both reading and math than children with less involved parents. This finding held across all income and education levels.
- younger students (grades 2–4) made greater gains than older students (grades 5–8).
- parents were more likely to be involved when their children were in elementary school (grades 2–4) than in middle or junior high school.
- students from lower-income families made fewer gains than students from higher-income families, no matter how involved their families. However, low-income students with more involved parents made greater gains than low-income students with less involved parents.
- a family's income level did not affect its level of involvement. Low-income families were as likely to attend regularly as higher-income families.

Do school efforts to engage families make a difference in student achievement? A study by Joyce Epstein and her colleagues of a family-school partnership program adopted by 80 Baltimore elementary schools found positive results. These schools are members of a network that receives technical assistance to develop six types of partnership, from working with children at home to being engaged in school decisions (see Table 9, p. 91). In schools with more highly rated partnership programs, students made small but significant gains on writing and math tests, compared with schools with lower-rated programs. Attendance also improved at the more highly rated schools (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, and Sanders, 1997).

Do programs that engage families in children's learning at home have effects on older children? Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at Johns Hopkins University have developed an interactive homework program called TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork). TIPS can be adopted by both elementary and middle schools. In a study of TIPS for Writing in two Baltimore middle schools, Epstein and her colleagues found that parent involvement in TIPS boosted sixth- and eighth-grade students' writing scores. Almost 700 sixth- and eighth-grade students and their families took part in the study. The more TIPS homework students completed, the better their grades in language arts (Epstein, Simon, and Salinas, 1997).

In a quasi-experimental study of TIPS for Science in a suburban middle school, Frances Van Voorhis (2001) found similar results. Three classes from two sixth-grade teachers and two classes from two eighth-grade teachers, a total of 253 students, took part in the study. The students were a cross-section of those in the school (about half white and half a mix of African American, Asian, Hispanic, and Russian). In sixth grade, they were in low, average, and honors classes; in eighth grade, they were in average and honors classes. The teachers assigned TIPS homework to six classes and non-interactive homework to four classes. The study covered two marking periods. After controlling for prior grades, family background, and amount of homework turned in, TIPS students earned significantly higher grades in science than the control group.

The studies that compared levels of involvement found that achievement increased directly with the extent to which parents were engaged in the program.

A study with a similar design on interactive math homework is discussed in the next section (Balli, Demo, and Wedman). Although the authors found no significant differences in posttest math achievement, they did discover that families of students assigned interactive homework were significantly more involved in math homework than families who did not. The researchers noted that the small sample size may have affected the results.

Summing up. Early childhood, preschool, and kindergarten programs that train parents to work with their children at home tend to have significant, positive effects (Baker et al., Kagitcibasi et al., Mathematica, Starkey and Klein). Children's grades and ratings from teachers tend to improve the longer they are in the program, and they make greater gains than children not in the program (Jordan et al., Shaver and Walls). The studies that compared levels of involvement found that achievement increased directly with the extent to which parents were engaged in the program (Jordan et al., Epstein et al., Shaver and Walls, Westat/Policy Studies Associates). Children from all family backgrounds and income levels made gains. In some cases the children having the most difficulty in school made the greatest gains (Jordan et al., Westat/Policy Studies Associates).

Older children benefit as well. Such simple programs as weekly homework assignments in which students engage their parents are linked to improved grades for elementary and middle grade students (Epstein, Simon, and Salinas; Van Voorhis). One study shows that if schools fully adopt well-designed practices to engage families, their students' test scores tend to rise and attendance improves (Epstein et al.). Standards-based reform practices are more likely to have a positive effect on students' test scores when teachers communicate regularly with parents (Westat/Policy Studies Associates).

One study, on the HIPPY program, reported inconsistent results (Baker et al.). The first cohort of students made significant gains compared with the control group, but the second did not. All the treatment and control groups attended a high-quality preschool program. Baker and her colleagues attributed the uneven result to natural variations in program impact. The HIPPY study done in Turkey found comparable results between the HIPPY group and the nursery school control group at the end of the program intervention (Kagitcibasi et al.). Several years later, however, the HIPPY graduates were doing significantly better in school than the control-group students. It may be that the influence of the program on the home environment helped to sustain longer-term effects.

Another study mentioned briefly in this section, the Balli, Demo, and Wedman study of interactive math homework, found no significant test score gains in the treatment group. The researchers speculate that the small sample size and short term (18 weeks) of the study may have influenced the results.

Taken together, we feel that these studies make a solid case that programs to engage families can have positive effects on student academic achievement and other outcomes.

Taken together, we feel that these studies make a solid case that programs to engage families can have positive effects on student academic achievement and other outcomes.

Key Finding

The continuity of family involvement at home appears to have a protective effect on children as they progress through our complex education system. The more families support their children's learning and educational progress, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education.

A three-year study of 1,200 urban students in a New England district by Charles Izzo and his colleagues (1999) found that parent involvement, both at home and at school, was related positively to student achievement. They followed randomly selected students in 27 schools from kindergarten to third grade. Each year, teachers rated the parents' involvement using these measures:

- the frequency of parent-teacher contacts each year
- constructive working relationships with parents (agree/disagree)
- parent participation in activities at school (yes/no)
- parents' educational activities at home (yes/no)

Parents' home activities were related to the widest range of gains on math and reading tests, compared with the other forms of parent involvement. The researchers also found that involvement at home remained steady, while involvement at school declined over time. This consistency, they concluded, may explain why the home activities had a stronger influence (Izzo et al., 1999).

Another study compared students whose parents are more highly involved with students whose parents are less involved. Rebecca Marcon (1999) looked at 700 African-American preschoolers in Washington, D.C. Using teacher reports of parent involvement, she compared students' grades and skill ratings. Parents with high involvement ratings, compared with those with low or median ratings, tended to have children with higher grades and scores. This finding held across all family income levels and backgrounds.

In their retrospective study, Wendy Miedel and Arthur Reynolds (1999) analyzed interviews from 700 parents of eighth graders in Chicago. In addition to their background and expectations for their children, parents reported on their involvement when their children were in preschool and kindergarten. Seventy percent had been engaged in Chicago Parent Centers, which offered workshops and information about children's learning, as well as activities to help parents be involved at school. To confirm parents'

reports, teachers rated parents' participation in school activities. These teacher ratings closely matched what the parents said.

Miedel and Reynolds compared results for students based on how much their parents had been involved. Between first and eighth grades, students whose parents took part in a greater number of activities did consistently better in school. They tended to earn higher scores on reading tests, spend less time in special education, and pass from one grade to the next. These findings held across all family backgrounds.

Parents with high involvement ratings, compared with those with low or median ratings, tended to have children with higher grades and scores. This finding held across all family income levels and backgrounds.

How do families' practices at home relate to middle and high school students' achievement? Several studies use data from a long-term study of eighth graders, called the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88). NELS:88 provides an easily available source of information for researchers. Starting in 1988, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) followed 25,000 eighth graders from 1,000 schools. It surveyed them at two-year intervals through 1994, and again in 2000. NCES also surveyed their parents, teachers, and school principals and collected data from high school transcripts. In 1988, the base year, and in follow-up years, students also took tests in math, reading, science, and social studies. The other studies of middle and high school students also use large national databases, such as the Survey of Parents and Children, done by the National Commission on Children, and the Longitudinal Study of American Youth.

These studies asked questions like these:

- What form does parent involvement take as children move from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school?
- How are parents involved at school versus at home?
- Do some forms of involvement have different effects than others? Under what conditions?

Exploring these layers beneath the surface has led to a richer, deeper definition of parent involvement. It has also allowed us to see that different types of involvement have different effects, at different ages, and in families of different backgrounds. Results from these studies will be covered under this and the next two key findings.

Support from home and school. What helps students through the transition to middle school? Looking at low-income African-American students from 62 families during the transition between fifth and sixth grades, Leslie Gutman and Carol Midgley (2000) asked what helped them through the change. They found that the combined effect of parent and school support had a significant impact on middle school grades. Students reported on three key influences:

1. Parent involvement: talking to students about school, checking homework, attending events, and volunteering at school.
2. Support from teachers: taking time to help students and being supportive rather than critical.
3. Belonging at school: feeling accepted, respected, and included at school.

Relating these factors to grade point averages, the researchers found that no single one appeared to have an effect. When the researchers combined parent involvement with the other two factors, however, another picture emerged. Students reporting high parent involvement and a high sense of belonging, or high parent involvement and high teacher support, had higher average grades than students who reported low support at home and school.

Table 5. Combined Effect of Teacher Support and High Parent Involvement on Grade Point Averages

Grade Point Averages (on a 0–4 scale)		
Teacher Support	High Parent Involvement	Low Parent Involvement
High	2.5	0.5
Low	0.6	0.7

Table 6. Combined Effect of Student Sense of Belonging and High Parent Involvement on Grade Point Averages

Grade Point Averages (on a 0–4 scale)		
Student Sense of Belonging	High Parent Involvement	Low Parent Involvement
High	3.4	1.0
Low	1.8	0.8

This study suggests that if children don't feel connected to school, parent involvement alone will not make a significant contribution to student achievement. Students must also feel that they belong at school and that their teachers support them.

Sanders and Herting (2000) looked at similar influences for 800 urban African-American middle-grade students. The question they addressed was why African-American girls tend to do better in school than African-American boys. On a 1–5 scale, students rated these factors:

- Support from teachers (like feeling comfortable asking the teacher for help).
- Support from parents (like giving praise for doing well in school).
- Involvement in church (like belonging to a church group).
- Attitudes toward school (like feeling it's important to work hard in school).
- Academic self-confidence (like feeling they do good work in school).
- Behavior in school (like being sent out of class for misbehaving).

Support from teachers and parents and involvement in church were positively related to attitudes, self-confidence, and behavior. These, in turn, influence achievement. The girls in this study felt more support from their family and teachers, and are more active in church, than the boys. The researchers were not surprised that African-American girls also reported more positive attitudes about their ability, less disruptive school behavior, and higher achievement than the boys did.

As mentioned earlier, some studies found that parent supervision, involvement with homework, and contacts with school seemed to be *negatively* related to grades and test scores (Catsambis, Fan and Chen, Izzo et al., Shumow and Miller). The consensus among the researchers was that parents are more involved in these ways when their students are struggling. In their analysis of data from 25 studies, Xitao Fan and Michael Chen (1999) suggest that parents impose more controls when children are not doing well. It is not clear if this strategy helps or hinders their children, because survey data are not designed to identify cause and effect. Catsambis and colleagues conclude, "the most effective types of parent involvement are not those geared towards behavioral supervision, but rather, those geared towards advising or guiding teens' academic decisions" (p. 24).

Efficacy. Parents' sense of their efficacy influences how they are involved during middle and high school. Efficacy means the power to produce an effect. In a study using a national sample of 900 families with children aged 10–17, Shumow and Lomax (2001) examined parents' feelings of success in guiding their children. Parents have a high sense of efficacy when they believe that they can

- help their children do well in school, be happy, and be safe.
- overcome negative influences and keep their children away from troublemakers, illegal drugs, or alcohol.
- have a positive impact such as improving quality of the school and making the neighborhood a better place.

The higher parents' sense of efficacy, the more closely they monitored their children and the more they were involved with school. The researchers then related efficacy to student outcomes. They used parent reports of their children's grades, academic level (high, medium, or low), and behavior at school, and students' reports of well-being (optimism, worries). They found that the higher parents' feelings of efficacy, the more their children reported doing better in school and feeling happy, safe, and stable. Families who live in safe, higher-income areas with good programs for young people had more sense of efficacy than families living in lower-quality areas.

A protective effect. When students report feeling support from both home and school, they tend to do better in school. They say that they have more self-confidence and feel school is more important. Data indicate that they also are less disruptive, earn higher grades, and are more likely to go to college (Gutman and Midgley, Sanders and Herting, Shumow and Lomax, Trusty). Although several studies compare home *versus* school settings for parent involvement to see which have stronger effects, it is clear that both are important:

- At school, parents learn how to engage their children in learning at home, get help if their children are struggling, and form a constructive relationship with teachers (Izzo et al., Miedel and Reynolds).
- At home, parents guide their children toward postsecondary education, make sure they read and do their homework, and stress the value of education. They also steer children away from risky behavior, help them maintain positive attitudes, and support them through problems at school (Catsambis, Fan, and Chen; Shumow and Lomax; Trusty).

For many children, home and school are two very different worlds. Comparing forms of parent involvement in the primary grades (K–3), Izzo and his colleagues found that taking part in activities at school was positively related to students' school engagement. The quality of parent-teacher interactions (as rated by teachers) was positively related to students' social and emotional adjustment. When their parents are involved at school, in other words, children are more likely to adjust to school, take part in class, and feel they belong and fit in.

Families with high achievers reported more time engaged in home learning activities than families with low achievers. For example, high-achieving children spend more time on homework, reading, and using materials like the dictionary.

In his analysis of NELS:88 data, Jerry Trusty found a similar protective influence. Parent involvement in eighth grade, as reported by students, influenced students' expectations to finish college six years later. Students who felt that their parents communicated with them and supported their learning were more likely to continue studies past high school. In other words, the more students felt their parents' involvement and support, the longer they planned to stay in school. For students, families are a continuing presence, while schools are shorter-term resources.

In their study of African-American eighth graders, Sanders and Herting focused on why girls do better in school than boys. African-American girls felt they received greater support from parents and teachers and were more likely to belong to church groups. They also reported higher grades, better behavior, and more self-confidence in school. For both boys and girls, family, church, and teachers were positive influences that were connected to higher achievement.

Further, higher levels of parent involvement appear to have more impact than lower levels. This does not just mean that more is better than less. It also means that active types of involvement may have a stronger effect than more passive types. In her study, Marcon classified the four types of involvement in her study as active (volunteering and visiting the classroom) or passive (getting information from the teacher at conferences or home visits). She found that active involvement in preschool was related to higher marks both on teacher ratings and report cards.

Key Finding

Families of all cultural backgrounds, education, and income levels encourage their children, talk with them about school, help them plan for higher education, and keep them focused on learning and homework. In other words, all families can, and often do, have a positive influence on their children's learning.

In a study of how families manage their children's time, Reginald Clark (1993) surveyed families of 1,171 third graders of all backgrounds in Los Angeles. After dividing the students into high and low achievers based on standardized test scores, he correlated the ways they spend their out-of-school time with grades, family background, and other factors. He found that the way children spent their time at home, not the family's income or education level, predicted their success in school. Most parents reported that they talk to their children about homework, read to their children, and make sure they do their assignments. However, families with high achievers reported more time engaged in home learning activities than families with low achievers. For example,

high-achieving children spend more time on homework, reading, and using materials like the dictionary.

Clark identified four variables that comprise what he calls "parents' press for academic success." Together, these factors explained 47 percent of the variation between low- and high-achieving students in the study:

- Parent knowledge about homework assignments.
- Parent perception of child's engagement in homework.
- Child knowledge of how to use a dictionary.
- Parent expectations for child's education.

Low achievers tended to come from homes where the parents were younger, did not work outside the home, had not been to college, and were low-income. Even though higher-achieving students often had parents who were not home to monitor their late afternoon activities, having parents in the workforce was related to higher test scores.

Despite the relationship between achievement and family resources, Clark found that high achievers came from a wide variety of family backgrounds. "Let us recall that 51.3 percent of the mothers of high achievers possessed no more than a high school education. Almost 40 percent . . . lived in single parent households. Almost 43 percent of the high achievers were Hispanic and 21.8 percent were Black" (p. 103).

In their study of NELS:88 data, Esther Ho Sui-Chu and Douglas Willms (1996) found that involvement at home had the greatest effect on student achievement. Compared with volunteering and attending school activities, parents' talking about school with their children and helping them plan their education programs were more highly related to higher grades and test scores.

Although children from higher-income families tend to do better in school, students of all backgrounds gain when their parents are involved. Ho Sui Chu and Willms found that higher-income families were slightly more involved in some ways, but the effect was small. On the whole, the researchers concluded, higher-income and two-parent families were not more involved with their children's education than lower-income and single-parent families. The types of involvement vary somewhat, however, by race and ethnicity.

An interesting twist is that children from all backgrounds tend to score higher in both math and reading if they attend a school where the average family income is higher. Ho Sui-Chu and Willms surmise that this is because schools in higher income areas appear to have a culture of greater parent involvement.

Using NELS:88 data, Sophia Catsambis (1998) studied 13,500 families whose children stayed in school through 12th grade. She measured the connection of six types of involvement (see Table 4, p. 22) with high school student achievement. Enhancing learning at home, she found, had the strongest effect.

- Forms of involvement with *less* effect: Parenting practices, communications with school, attending school events, and contacts with other parents.
- Forms of involvement with *more* effect: Expressing high expectations, discussing going to college, and helping students prepare for college.

When their families guided them to classes that would lead to higher education, students were more likely to enroll in a higher-level program, earn credits, and score higher on tests. The connection was somewhat greater for math and science than for English, and for earning credits than scoring well on tests. Looking back from parent involvement in grades 8 through 12, Catsambis found that parents' expectations for their students to do well and attend college had the strongest effect on grade 12 test scores in all subjects. These findings held across all family backgrounds.

In their meta-analysis of 25 studies, Xitao Fan and Michael Chen (1999) also found that parents' aspirations for their children were associated with higher grades, test scores, and passing rates. By aspirations, they mean expectations for their children to do well in school, graduate, and go on to higher education. In describing the connection, they explain,

> The overall relationship between parent involvement and students' academic achievement is close to .30. Although an average correlation of .30 may appear low to many people . . . this represents a medium effect size in social sciences . . . certainly a meaningful effect. (p. 18)

In practical terms, this means that students from families with above-median parent involvement showed success rates that were 30 percent higher than those from families with below-median parent involvement. "This is not trivial by any standard," Fan and Chen conclude (p. 18).

Gender influences. Is gender a factor? In their study of 60 middle school students' families, Lee Shumow and Joe Miller found that involvement at home contributed to positive attitudes toward school, while involvement at school contributed to higher grades. Relating gender to different types of involvement, the researchers found:

- Fathers and mothers were equally involved at home, but mothers were more involved at school than fathers.
- The higher their education level, the more mothers were involved at school. Fathers of all education levels were less involved at school than mothers.
- Student gender did not make a difference in the level or type of parent involvement.
- The more parents were involved at home, the more students felt it was important to perform well in school.

Taken together, Shumow and Miller found that parent involvement in both settings had a significant effect on all student outcomes.

A NELS:88 study of gender pairs (mother-son; father-daughter; mother-daughter, father-son) in the middle grades also found some interesting variations. Deborah Bugg Williams (1998) found that parents' expectations for their children's education and their out-of-school activities are positively linked to all measures of their children's achievement. These effects occurred in all pairings of parents and children. Mothers and fathers had varying influence, however, on their sons' and daughters' academic performance. For example, mothers' involvement was more strongly related to math and reading achievement for both sons and daughters. Fathers' involvement also had an effect, but it was not as significant.

Asian, Hispanic, and African-American parents were as active in their middle and high school children's education as white parents, but in slightly different ways.

Racial ethnic, class, and cultural variations. Several NELS:88 studies found that Asian, Hispanic, and African-American parents were as active in their middle and high school children's education as white parents, but in slightly different ways (Catsambis, Ho Sui-Chu and Willms, Keith and Keith). This finding is repeated in a few more focused studies of lower-income and African-American students (Gutman and Midgley, Miedel and Reynolds, Sanders and Herting). The program studies covered under the first finding also show that low-income families and families of color responded readily to training and home visits to assist them in helping their younger children learn (Baker et al.; Epstein, Simon, and Salinas; Mathematica; Shaver and Walls; Starkey and Klein; Van Voorhis; Westat/Policy Studies Associates).

While families of all backgrounds maintain rules about grades and homework throughout high school, Ho Sui-Chu and Willms found some variations by ethnicity in the NELS:88 data:

- African Americans reported slightly higher involvement than whites reported in all types of involvement at home. At school, the levels of involvement reported was about the same.
- Hispanics reported slightly higher levels of home supervision than whites did, but reported about the same in all other types.
- Asians reported more supervision at home than whites reported. Asians also reported spending less time discussing school, communicating with school staff, and volunteering and attending PTO meetings than white families reported.

Families of all income and social levels are involved at home, but families with higher income and social class tend to be more involved at school. In their study of NELS:88 data on more than 21,000 families, Timothy Keith and Patricia Keith (1993) found that "parent involvement has a strong effect on the learning of eighth grade youth" (p. 486). (Each standard deviation change in parent involvement leads to a .287 standard deviation change in eighth-grade test scores.) The effect was slightly greater for math and social studies than for other subjects. By using path analysis, they found that most of this effect was through encouraging homework, at-home reading, and other academic activities.

Keith and Keith found contradictory trends when correlating family background with levels of involvement. Parents with higher income appeared to be more involved than those with lower income. Yet families from ethnic groups often labeled "at risk"

(African American, Hispanic, and Native American) reported more involvement than those from advantaged ethnic groups. They recommend further study of this issue. Shumow and Miller, using data on 60 families from another national database (Longitudinal Study of American Youth) found a similar contradiction. As parents' educational level increased, so did their involvement, but parents of struggling and average students reported more involvement at home than did parents of successful students.

Why families with more income and education tend to be more involved at school is addressed in a case study by Annette Lareau and Erin Horvat (1999). The researchers observed that white, middle-class families are more comfortable with school staff because they share "social and cultural capital." These families have culturally supportive social networks, use the same vocabulary as teachers, feel entitled to treat teachers as equals, and have access to childcare and transportation. This allows them "to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust" (p. 44). We will look more closely at this study in the next section on successful practice to engage families from diverse backgrounds.

Key Finding

Parent and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement. To be effective, the form of involvement should be focused on improving achievement and be designed to engage families and students in developing specific knowledge and skills.

Programs designed to engage families of young children in improving literacy and math skills are examples of this principle. As we saw in the findings about such programs, they tended to accomplish what they set out to do (Baker et al., Kagitcibasi et al./HIPPY, Jordan et al./Project EASE, and Mathematica/Early Head Start). An interesting confirmation of this point appeared in Starkey and Klein's study of math skills in Head Start children. Although the intervention was designed to engage families only in helping children develop math skills, the researchers also measured literacy skills. They found that the program children improved on math skills, but not literacy development, and concluded that curriculum supports should be tailored to specific areas of learning.

In elementary school, workshops that inform parents about what their children are learning and how to help their children at home are also connected to gains in achievement. The workshops for Title I parents described in the Shaver and Walls study included:

- updates on their children's progress.
- training on topics responding to their interests, such as supporting children through crisis, discipline strategies, and increasing your child's vocabulary.
- learning packets in reading and math, as well as training in how to use them.

It can be difficult to isolate the impact of parent involvement from the impact of other features of Title I and similar programs. The Westat/Policy Studies Associates study

used advanced statistical methods to distinguish the effects of several different standards-based reform practices. It found that students made greater and more consistent gains when teachers were "especially active" in outreach to parents. Outreach is defined as:

- meeting with parents face to face.
- sending materials on ways to help their child at home.
- telephoning both routinely and when their child is having problems.

The researchers do not suggest that the standards-based practices were ineffective, but that engaging parents helped the entire program work better. This suggests a reciprocal relationship: Engaging parents in ways that are linked to improving achievement may contribute to the success of school reform. Likewise, improving teaching and standards may contribute to the effectiveness of engaging parents in raising student achievement.

Another example is Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), an interactive homework program designed by Epstein and her colleagues. The two studies on TIPS included in this review focus on writing and science. TIPS for middle school writing was linked to higher grades in language arts and higher test scores in writing (Epstein, Simon, and Salinas). TIPS for middle school science contributed to higher grades in science (Van Voorhis). In her study of Baltimore schools with partnership programs, Epstein explicitly notes that future researchers might find greater gains if they develop measures for partnership practices that are focused on writing, reading, and math.

Most studies examined the effects of parents' working directly with their children. An exception is Don Moore's study about local school councils. The 1988 Chicago school reform law requires every public school to elect a local school council (LSC). A majority of members must be parents with children in the school. Among other tasks, LSCs select the principal and develop a yearly school-improvement plan. Moore found that schools "substantially up" in reading scores tended to have strong councils, while schools with level or declining reading achievement tended to have weak councils. Weak versus strong ratings were made using 27 indicators of LSC contribution to the school's educational program, leadership, and climate. The author found a strong relationship between "cooperative adult effort" among the teachers, parents, community members, and administrators involved in the school and "a trend of substantially improved achievement" (Moore, 1998, p. 79).

Studies of programs based in the community or operated by community groups also illustrate the point about links to learning. Marcia Invernizzi and her colleagues (1997) looked at a program called Book Buddies, which trains community volunteers to tutor first and second graders in reading. Compared with their baseline scores at the start of the program, the students made significant gains. Students who took part in more than 40 sessions made greater gains than students attending fewer than 40 sessions. There was no control group in this study.

Community school programs often offer academic assistance, such as tutoring, after-school learning programs, and homework clinics. ("Community school" is a term that includes a number of school-community initiatives, such as Caring Communities,

Communities in Schools, Beacon Schools, and many others.) Joy Dryfoos (2000) reviewed evaluations of community schools to document their impact on student outcomes. Community schools are open year-round, and their programs are designed with input from families, young people, educators, and local residents. A typical program has these features:

- Before- and after-school learning programs.
- A family support center that can assist families with health and social services.
- Volunteers and local partners from the community.

In community school programs that were specifically focused on learning and achievement, 36 of 49 studies (73 percent) indicated that students in the program improved their performance in school. (Some community school programs focus on health care, teen pregnancy prevention, and other non-academic outcomes.) In general, students in programs that were focused on learning made gains in reading and math test scores over two to three years. Very few of these evaluations, however, used rigorous research methods. For example, a community school in Long Beach, California, integrated academic standards into its extended-day activities. In one year, grades and test scores improved for students in grades 1–3, so that the percentage of students scoring below average on tests dropped from 49 percent to 30 percent. The percentage of students with above-average grades rose from 19 percent to 34 percent. There was no control group (Dryfoos).

An early evaluation report of the California Healthy Start program looked at 40 program sites that offer health, education, and social services to needy families. Lynn Newman (1995) studied a core group of 270 students served by the programs for just under a year. She found four different Healthy Start models:

- School-site family resource centers, where families can come for a variety of services.
- Satellite family service centers, serving more than one school and not based at a school.
- Family service coordination teams, working directly with families.
- Youth service programs aimed at teenagers, based mostly at schools.

When results were broken down by program type, only students served by the family service coordination teams showed significant increases in grades. These team-based programs involved school staff and teachers more heavily than the other programs. They also worked more directly with families and were more focused on students. Newman also found that students in programs with a stated goal of improving student learning were more likely to show gains than students in programs without such a goal.

Clark (2002) compared how 1,058 high- and low-achieving students of all ages and backgrounds used their out-of-school time. Students scoring at the 50th percentile or above spent at least nine hours a week in such "high-yield activities" as reading, writing, and study guided by adults. In contrast, students scoring at or below the 25th percentile spent much more time on unstructured leisure activities, such as "hanging out," talking on the phone, playing games, and watching television. This gap in learning

time adds up. In elementary school, it can amount to 80 more hours of learning in a year. The difference in how time is spent also grows wider as students get older. For example, the gap between high- and low-achieving students' time in weekly learning activities is about two hours in elementary school and seven hours in high school.

Clark found that academic success (as measured by standardized test scores) is more likely when

- students spend at least 15 hours per week doing high-quality learning activities with teachers.
- students spend 8–15 hours a week fully engaged in out-of-school learning activities.
- adults with high standards for achievement guide students' out-of-school activities.
- students know how to study, plan, and complete projects and have access to libraries and reference materials.

Studies on Effective Strategies to Connect Schools, Families, and Community

In the previous section, we presented findings about the relationship between various forms of family and community connections and student achievement. The findings offered valuable information about the kind and level of family-community connections that positively relate to higher levels of student achievement.

This section reviews what we learned from the research about how these connections can be formed and sustained. As we reviewed the research, the number of studies that examined how best to make connections among school staff, families, and community members to support student achievement excited us. This body of research was not present in the literature for the 1994 edition of *A New Generation of Evidence*. Many new studies focus on an area of great interest to educators: how to create and sustain connections between families and school staff from diverse cultural and class backgrounds.

We debated whether this group of studies on effective practices to cultivate connections between schools, families, and communities belonged in this synthesis. We decided that these studies offer critical information for school staff, parents, and community leaders attempting to create initiatives that engage families and communities in student learning. How can we implement the programs identified in the previous section if we cannot bring the key groups to the table? These studies shed light on the processes needed to make and sustain connections among schools, families, and communities. These studies offer the procedural knowledge, or the "how to" information, about forging connections among school staff, family, and community members that can support student achievement.

Many of the studies were conducted at school sites that were either high achieving or were making steady gains in student achievement. Others focused on families of high-achieving students. The majority of the research in this section consists of descriptive case studies using small sample sizes. The researchers, therefore, make no claims that the results of their studies apply to all schools or families or that their results imply cause and effect between school, family, and community connections and student achievement.

The 16 studies in this section identified effective practices to connect families and communities to schools. Several ask the following questions:

- Why and how do parents get involved in their children's education?
- What are the factors that influence parents' involvement?
- What matters when trying to connect school staff and families?

A smaller number of studies in this group ask questions about effective practices to engage community with schools. From these studies, one overarching conclusion emerged:

When programs and initiatives focus on building respectful and trusting relationships among school staff, families, and community members, they are effective in creating and sustaining family and community connections with schools.

What these studies told us was that *relationships matter*. How parents and community members are viewed and treated by school staff—as assets to the process of raising student achievement rather than liabilities—surfaced as a theme throughout the studies. Charles Payne and Mariame Kaba (2001) state that the level of *social trust*—the quality of staff-to-staff and staff-to-parent relationships at a school—can predict the quality of a school. Payne and Kaba report on a study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. The group surveyed staff at 210 schools in an attempt to identify the characteristics shared by the schools that were improving. "When the 30 most highly rated schools were compared with the 30 poorest, a battery of questions about the quality of relationships proved to be one of the best predictors" (p. 5). Teachers at the top 30 schools reported sensing a great deal of respect from other teachers, while teachers at the bottom 30 schools stated that they do not trust each other. In addition to staff-to-staff relations, this pattern repeated itself in *teacher-to-parent* relationships. The authors state that social trust—the quality of the relationships—is the key factor associated with improving schools.

These studies suggest that the quality of the relationship influences whether connections among schools, families, and communities will be formed and sustained.

The studies in this section echo the findings of Payne and Kaba. These studies suggest that the quality of the relationship influences whether connections among schools, families, and communities will be formed and sustained. How then, are these respectful relationships created between schools, families, and communities? The following findings offer more detailed information about specific relationship-building strategies to create these connections to support student achievement.

Key Finding

Programs that successfully connect with families and community invite involvement, are welcoming, and address specific parent and community needs.

How do schools go about making connections with families and community?

Families

Several studies try to answer to what practices are effective by asking parents how and why they are involved in their children's education. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler (1997) conducted a literature review to learn why parents become involved in their children's learning. From their analysis, they developed a theoretical model to explain why parents are involved. Their model suggests that parents' involvement decisions and choices are based on several constructs.

The first construct is parents' "personal construction of the parent role"—what parents believe they are supposed to do in relation to their children's education. This defines the activities that parents feel are important, necessary, and permissible to be involved in on behalf of their children. How parents construct this role stems from expectations

and influences of groups that parents belong to or with which they identify. These groups can be other family members, the child's school, and their workplace. Parents' beliefs about child rearing and about appropriate parent home-support roles also influence their role construction. This construct suggests that different cultural and class contexts shape how parents define their role about how to engage in their children's education.

The second construct focuses on parents' "personal sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school." This has to do with whether parents believe and are confident about their ability to be helpful to their child. Parents' beliefs about whether

- they have the skills and knowledge necessary to help their children,
- their children can learn what they have to share and teach, and
- they can find alternative sources of skill or knowledge if and when these sources become necessary shape their sense of efficacy and therefore their involvement.

The third construct influencing parents' decisions about their involvement comes from "general invitations, demands, and opportunities for family involvement." The question examined by the authors was, "Do the parents perceive that the child and the school want and are interested in their involvement?" In this construct, the child's age and developmental level, overall level of performance, personality qualities, and the general enthusiasm about parents' involvement at the school all influence parents' decisions about participation. Thus school staff and children signal their expectations about involvement to parents. These signals ultimately influence parents' decisions about involvement.

Once parents decide to become involved, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler suggest that parents' choices about how they are involved are shaped by three additional constructs:

1. parents' perceptions of their own skills, interests, and abilities;
2. parents' experiences of other demands on time and energy; and
3. parents' experiences of specific suggestions and invitations for involvement from children, teachers, and schools.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler suggest that schools and communities can better engage families by working actively to invite and welcome parent involvement and by developing programs that support and enhance parents' efficacy for involvement in their children's schooling.

Karen Mapp (2002) explored how and why parents, specifically those from economically distressed circumstances, are involved in their children's education. Her study examined the factors that influence parents' involvement. Mapp conducted the study at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School, an urban school serving a racially and socioeconomically diverse population of approximately 220 students.

Mapp conducted one-on-one, in-depth interviews with 18 O'Hearn parents whose children, based on family income level, qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. This

group consisted of sixteen women and two men: nine African Americans, eight whites, and one Hispanic American. Mapp also interviewed seven members of the O'Hearn School staff: the principal, the secretary, the custodian, and four teachers to gain important information about the school's culture and history. Observations were done at activities such as special events for parents, school plays, and school committee meetings.

According to the 18 parents, *social* and *school* factors influence how and why they are involved in their children's education. Social factors from parents' own experiences and history included

- parents' own educational experiences in school,
- their own parents' involvement when they were students,
- their beliefs about family involvement as shaped by cultural norms and values, and
- the burden of family responsibilities and time commitments.

An important finding was that school factors, specifically those that are relational in nature, have a major impact on parents' involvement. When school staff engage in caring and trusting relationships with parents that recognize parents as partners in the educational development of children, these relationships enhance parents' desire to be involved and influence how they participate in their children's educational development.

Parents described a process by which these relationships were formed. This process has been adopted by the O'Hearn staff so that the school community *welcomes* parents into the school, *honors* their participation, and *connects* with parents through a focus on the children and their learning.

Borrowing a concept from family systems literature, Mapp calls the strategies of welcoming, honoring, and connecting families "the joining process." Parents state that this process creates a school culture and community where they feel like "members of a family." Parents respond to this culture by participating in their children's education in ways that they themselves had never foreseen and by becoming loyal members of the school community.

Delores Peña's (2000) study also explored how parents in one urban elementary school in Texas were or were not involved in their children's education and the factors that influenced their involvement. The school population was 95.5 percent Mexican. Peña interviewed 28 parents of children in prekindergarten/kindergarten and third-/fourth-grade classes. She also conducted observations of a range of meetings and activities and examined school documents regarding parent involvement.

Her study found that parent involvement was influenced by many factors. These include language, parent cliques, parent educational level, attitudes of school staff, cultural influences, and such family issues as childcare. Peña emphasizes that it is important for school staff to take the time to gain the trust of parents and to inform them of how they can be involved. In the study, parents not only identified factors that they felt

influenced their involvement, but they also offered suggestions for improving parent involvement:

- Make the parents feel more welcomed.
- Change the attitudes of school staff so that they recognize the advantages of teachers and parents working together.
- Consider the educational level, language, culture, and home situation of parents.
- Give teachers time to plan and organize parent activities.
- Take parents' interests and needs into consideration when planning activities.
- Recognize that even if parents cannot be present at school, helping their children at home is also a valuable contribution.
- Provide parents with knowledge about how to be involved in a range of involvement opportunities.

Starkey and Klein (2000) underscore that parent programs and interventions work best when the strategies respect the needs of families.

Starkey and Klein (2000) underscore that parent programs and interventions work best when the strategies respect the needs of families. They studied the impact of a math intervention with Head Start parents on prekindergarten children's math development. The study showed that children of parents participating in the program developed more extensive math knowledge than children in a control group. The study also reveals important information about the type of intervention that engages parents. The intervention respected the needs of parents by addressing such barriers to parent involvement as childcare, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. These barriers were overcome by

- providing childcare at the program during the class,
- arranging carpools,
- encouraging family members to send a substitute family member to a class when necessary, and
- providing math kits for use at home.

When the programs honored the needs of parents, they readily participated in the activities.

Do different kinds of invitations and prompts to parents make a difference? Some studies looked closely at the types of invitations or prompts made by schools to involve families. The Westat study (2001) discussed in the previous section revealed that certain types of teacher invitations and outreach strategies work better than others to engage parents. The study pointed out that in schools in which teachers reported having high levels of outreach with parents—meeting face-to-face with parents, sending parents materials on ways to help their child at home, and telephoning routinely—the test scores of students grew at a 40 percent higher rate than in schools where teachers reported low levels of outreach.

Mavis Sanders, Joyce Epstein, and Lori Connors-Tadros (1999) examined whether particular types of parent involvement activities influence parent attitudes at the high school level. They analyzed survey data from 423 parents at six high schools in Maryland—two urban, two suburban, and two rural. The surveys were administered to

help the high schools examine their partnership programs with families and to determine areas that needed work. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to identify the independent effects of the schools' existing parent involvement programs on parents' attitudes about the high schools and on involvement in their teens' education at home and at school.

Ninety percent of the parents surveyed agreed that parent involvement is necessary at the high school level. The findings suggested that different types of school practices result in different involvement behaviors reported by parents:

- Involvement at home is positively and significantly influenced by school practices that assist parenting and facilitate interactions with teens on learning at home.
- Involvement at school is most strongly influenced by school practices that encourage volunteering and participation in school decision making.

The authors conclude that "high schools that develop strong programs of partnership that include practices for different types of involvement are likely to improve parent attitudes towards the school and encourage greater family involvement at home and at school" (p. 17).

Simon (2000) also studied family and community connections with high schools, the effects on students' success, and the influence of high school outreach on family involvement. This study used NELS:88 (National Educational Longitudinal Study) data for about 11,000 students. Simon tested how parents' reports on their high schools' outreach activities predict involvement in parenting, volunteering, and learning at home activities. She then tested how administrator reports of schools' outreach predict their ratings of families' involvement in parenting, volunteering, and decision-making practices.

Simon found that families and community members do participate in a range of partnership activities to support students through high school. Parent involvement increases with support from the school. For example, when school staff members contact parents about these opportunities, parents are more likely to

- attend planning workshops and talk to their teenagers about college and employment.
- volunteer as audience members at school activities.
- work more often with their teenagers on homework.
- talk with teenagers more often about school.

Sandra Balli, David Demo, and John Wedman (1998) looked at a mathematics homework intervention designed to increase family involvement in homework. They investigated how differences in levels of family involvement in homework and in student achievement on a posttest were related to differential prompts for involvement in homework.

The study was based on three math classes taught by the same teacher, with students who were similar in achievement level. Participants were 74 white sixth graders

(31 boys and 43 girls) and their mostly middle-class families. The three math classes were nearly identical in terms of students' previous math achievement, with similar ranges of academic ability and family background.

In the three sixth-grade math classes, the teacher distributed 20 homework assignments that required students to interact with a family member. By random selection, some students received assignments prompting them with directions on how to involve a family member or some students received assignments that also prompted families to write comments and requested a parent signature. Some received no prompts. Although the authors found no significant differences in posttest achievement, they did discover that families of students who received prompts were significantly more involved in mathematics homework than families who did not.

The importance of dialogue ("two-way communication") and respect ("receptivity and openness") in creating partnerships were emphasized, as well as the leadership of the principal and the support of the district.

Community

Mavis Sanders and Adia Harvey (2000) studied how one urban elementary school was able to develop partnerships with community organizations. The study identifies the types of connections and factors that supported the development of the connections.

Data was collected over the course of six months through semistructured individual interviews with the principal, assistant principal, teachers, parents, and the school's community partners. The researchers also held focus groups with students and made field observations. Researchers conducted a qualitative data analysis to identify key themes and processes. They found that these factors contributed to successful community partnerships:

- the school's commitment to learning,
- the principal's support and vision for community involvement, and
- the school's willingness to engage in two-way communication with potential partners about their level and kind of involvement.

The importance of dialogue ("two-way communication") and respect ("receptivity and openness") in creating partnerships were emphasized, as well as the leadership of the principal and the support of the district.

Key Finding

Parent involvement programs that are effective in engaging diverse families recognize, respect, and address cultural and class differences.

How do schools connect with families from diverse cultural and class backgrounds? Annette Lareau and Erin McNamara Horvath (1999) studied the type of school-parent interactions that can hinder parent engagement with the school. They looked at the involvement of black and white parents with their third graders as well as their relationship with the school staff. This descriptive case study was conducted in a Midwestern town of approximately 25,000 people. The authors chose a sample of 24 third graders—12 white and 12 black. Interviews were conducted with the students' parents (40 interviews) and with nine educators.

Lareau and Horvath found that the white families' social and cultural background gave them skills and assets—the authors called these "social capital"—that were more aligned with those of the predominantly white school staff. This alignment enabled the white parents to work more easily with school staff than with black parents.

Even though school staff thought they welcomed all families, the researchers found that the educators recognized only a narrow band of acceptable behaviors. Teachers liked parents who deferred to them and accepted their opinions about their children. When black parents challenged teachers' perceptions about their children or criticized teachers, their behaviors were rebuffed as "unacceptable" and "destructive." This "social capital" disconnect between black parents and school staff has a negative influence on the parents' relationship with the school. The authors suggest that social capital, and how schools value and react to it, perpetuates inequality in schools and therefore in society.

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Several studies offer suggestions about how this disconnect can be addressed when school staff and families come from different social and cultural backgrounds. A study by Jay Scribner, Michele Young, and Anne Pedroza (1999) looked at the relationships between parents and school staff at high-performing Hispanic elementary and secondary schools located in the Texan borderlands. Through the qualitative data gathered for this study, the researchers identified five "best practice" strategies used by school staff and parents to build collaborative relationships:

1. Build on cultural values of Hispanic parents.
2. Stress personal contact with parents.
3. Foster communication with parents.
4. Create a warm environment for parents.
5. Facilitate structural accommodations for parent involvement.

Gerardo López (2001) studied the involvement patterns of immigrant/migrant families in the Texas Rio Grande Valley. A purposeful sample of four immigrant/migrant families was selected from four separate school districts. The families identified had children who were highly successful in school. All the children in these families graduated in the top 10 percent of their class. López conducted a series of observations and in-depth interviews with both immediate and extended family members in each household. Forty observations and 32 interviews were conducted over a period of six months.

López found that the parents perceived themselves as being *highly* involved in the educational lives of their children. The families rarely, if ever, went to functions at the school. For each of the families, "involvement" was defined as teaching their children the "value of education through the medium of hard work." All the families in the study reported taking their children at an early age to work with them in the fields and giving their children *consejos* (advice) as to the limited opportunities available if they dropped out of school.

López concludes that if these parents were to be seen through a "traditional" involvement lens, "they would appear to be largely uninvolved in their children's education—

since there was little formal interaction between the parents and the school, and since they rarely (if ever) reinforced particular school lessons in the home." He challenges educators and policymakers to develop parent involvement programs that are "more organic and sensitive to an expanded, as opposed to a limited, definition of involvement." He also challenges them to recognize and build on the ways that parents from diverse backgrounds and cultures are already involved in the educational lives of their children (pp. 15–16).

López challenges educators and policymakers to develop parent involvement programs that are "more organic and sensitive to an expanded, as opposed to a limited, definition of involvement."

Janet Chrispeels and Elvira Rivero (2000) studied the impact of a program intervention called the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) on a group of Latino immigrant parents. The overarching research question was, "How do Latino parents define their role and perceive their place in their children's education and their relationship with the school?" The authors examined the impact of PIQE by assessing parents' perceptions of their role and place in their children's education before and after their participation in the program.

The program consists of eight 90-minute sessions using a prescribed curriculum translated into the parents' language. An important component of the training is the use of PIQE instructors who acted as "cultural brokers." The researchers adopted this term from Delgado-Gaitán (1996), who used it to refer to a white educator who, because of his long affiliation with the Latino community, was able to translate between his ethnic and cultural group and the Latinos. The instructors selected for the program were from backgrounds and life experiences similar to the participants, had succeeded in the U.S. system, and could interpret this system to the Latino parents.

Data collection included pretest and posttest survey data from 95 parents participating in the program, observations and videotapes of the training sessions, in-depth interviews, and a review of artifacts.

The findings from the Chrispeels and Rivero study suggest that parents developed higher levels of engagement with their children and with the school, especially with teachers, as a result of participation in the PIQE program. All families in the survey reported shifts in their parenting styles as a result of their participation in the program. Parents attributed changes in their discipline methods, communication within the family and with teachers, and awareness of how to build their child's self-esteem to the information PIQE gave them. The study demonstrated that parents' concepts about their place and role in their children's education are not fixed.

Chrispeels and Rivero suggest that the role and importance of the cultural broker be more closely studied. They propose that through the instructors the PIQE program is playing the role of cultural broker between parents and the schools. The study demonstrates that "a cultural broker can be effective in helping parents learn strategies for interacting with teachers and expanding their role construction." The authors add, "Little has been done to understand if such a role could similarly facilitate teachers' interactions with immigrant and diverse parents" (pp. 47–48).

Key Finding

Effective programs to engage families and community embrace a philosophy of partnership. The responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff, and community members.

Some of the study findings suggest that school, family, and community connection initiatives work best when they embrace a philosophy of partnership and are integrated into a comprehensive approach to improve student achievement. Margaret Wang, Jane Oates, and Nancy Weishew (1997) report on three "case scenarios" to illustrate the potential of the Community for Learning program (CFL) to improve student learning in urban schools.

Described as a "broad-based, school-family-community-linked coordinated approach," the CFL design is based on two programs, the Adapted Learning Environments Model and James Comer's School Development Program (p. 176).Wang and colleagues write, "A centerpiece of CFL is a framework for a collaborative process of uniting people and resources in initiating schoolwide restructuring efforts to ensure the schooling success of every student" (p. 10). In the area of parent involvement, CFL supports a "shared partnership approach." The program encourages schools to actively involve families through "communication and cooperation between home and school" (p. 17).

The reported findings are based on student surveys and district standardized test scores in reading and math.

The achievement data over two years show that in schools and classrooms that implemented the CFL program, fewer students than expected were in the bottom 20 percent of reading and math. More students than expected scored in the top 20 percent (with one exception). Attendance increased in the middle school. Student perceptions about the learning environment in their classroom and school were generally higher than those of students in comparison schools/classrooms.

The program's approach links comprehensive school change to "rooted connections with family and community." The findings are attributed to a combination of successful practices in an "integrated system of delivery" specific to each school. The authors emphasize that no one practice of the CFL approach can account for student improvement. Rather, the integrated system of delivery where several practices are combined, including family involvement, is key.

The findings of a study by Claire Smrekar, James Guthrie, Debra Owens, and Pearl Sims (2001) support the Wang et al. findings that parent and community involvement programs should be part of an integrated, comprehensive plan to support student achievement. The researchers conducted a three-year study of how Department of Defense schools have achieved high levels of student achievement among all of the students that they serve. On average, minority students account for 40 percent of the Department of Defense enrollment. The gap between test scores of African-American

or Latino students and white students is lower among students in the Department of Defense schools than in states.

The study attributes the achievement of high academic standards to the existence of a culture where parents and teachers work as a team to support students. The authors state that the Department of Defense schools reflect an elevated "corporate commitment" that expects and supports parent involvement in at-home and school-based activities. "Military and school staff often refer to the 'village' culture of support associated with military base life, in which families closely linked by membership and motivation to 'move up in the ranks' develop a sense of shared responsibility for children's safety and well-being." The military environment supports "community conditions" that construct a productive set of educational opportunities for all students (p. xi).

Michael Rubenstein and Jessica Wodatch (2000) conducted a policy study of the Title I program. The purpose of the study was to

1. describe practices in 18 improving and high-performing secondary schools that serve disadvantaged students,
2. determine how Title I functioned in these schools, and
3. identify issues related to improvement in secondary schools with concentrations of disadvantaged students.

The schools in the case studies were chosen because they were engaged in comprehensive research-based school-improvement efforts to raise student achievement, enrolled a significant proportion of low-income students, and had student achievement that was either consistently high or steadily improving. The selected schools used a variety of approaches to school improvement and reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of their varied geographic regions. Data were collected through three-day site visits, interviews, school documents, and observations of classroom instruction and daily student life. The researchers who visited the sites wrote the case studies.

Parent involvement was found to be one of the non-instructional services that all the schools identified as an important component of their programs. The study recognized that parent involvement is difficult to achieve and maintain at the secondary level, but suggest that the involvement is an integral part of the program design.

Studies on Parent and Community Organizing Efforts to Improve Schools

Parent and community organizing is a renewed area of activity and research. We included these studies because they forecast developments in this field and because the initiatives they cover are aimed at improving student academic achievement and other outcomes. There is one major finding:

Key Finding

Organized initiatives to build parent and community leadership to improve low-performing schools are developing in low-income urban areas and the rural South. These community organizing efforts use strategies that are aimed at establishing a power base to hold schools and school districts accountable for low student achievement. They have contributed to changes in policy, resources, personnel, school culture, and educational programs.

In a growing number of districts across the country, community groups are organizing a power base of parents and residents in low-income communities. In addition, related constituency-building efforts are engaging the larger community, including business leaders and public officials, to build public support for changes in education policy. The goal of these efforts is to improve outcomes for all students through increased funding and educational resources.

In low-income urban and rural areas, many schools are underfunded, overcrowded, and poor performing. Schools in these districts are more likely to have crumbling facilities, undercertified teachers, and out-of-date textbooks and learning materials. Students attending these schools are shortchanged.

Across the country, community organizing groups have begun to address these issues. Of the 66 groups surveyed by the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University (Mediratta et al., 2002), 50 have begun organizing since 1994. A related and growing field of work is constituency building for school reform. Jacobs and Hirota (in press) defined constituency building as organizing and engaging people with a stake in public education. This work uses a variety of approaches, including mobilizing organizations, holding public debate and discussion, and organizing parents and community members.

While community organizing around poor schools is not new, this recent round of activity has important differences from the past. During the 1960s, African-American and Latino communities began wide-scale mobilization in response to chronically failing schools. One memorable result was the demand for community control in cities throughout the country—notably New York City, Detroit, and Chicago. While the anger and frustration are similar, what is different is who is doing the organizing.

The mobilizations of the 1960s and 1970s were ad hoc and community-wide, often citywide, and part of the grassroots civil-rights movement. The organizers were usually

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not trying to build a permanent base or work intensively one school at a time. The more-recent wave of organizing is spurred by neighborhood-based community organizations. Many are established groups that had previously focused on housing, economic development, and youth service. Now they are turning their attention to school improvement.

The more-recent wave of organizing is spurred by neighborhood-based community organizations that had previously focused on housing, economic development, and youth service. Now they are turning their attention to school improvement.

What is community organizing? Kavitha Mediratta, Norm Fruchter, and their colleagues developed five criteria that define groups doing community organizing. Such groups are

1. building a base of parents, young people, and/or residents who engage in collective action to address poor performance and create excellent public schools for all children.
2. focusing on winning concrete changes in schools and employing such strategies as mobilization (bringing together large numbers of people), direct action (picketing and demonstrations), negotiation, training, and forming coalitions with other groups.
3. supporting democratic decision making by members in all aspects of the organization.
4. developing leaders from within an ever-growing membership.
5. building a strong, lasting organization to alter the power relations that lead to failing schools.

This work is markedly unlike the forms of parent and community involvement considered in the other studies we have just reviewed. First, it is based outside schools, and is designed, led, and controlled by parents and community members. Second, it is overtly political—that is, it seeks to change the power relations that create and sustain poorly functioning schools. A key goal of community organizing and constituency building is to give parents and residents more power over what happens in schools and in the distribution of resources among schools.

Third, it aims to change conditions that underlie poor student performance. These include low standards and expectations, mediocre teaching, inadequate learning materials, and weak instructional leadership. These stem, in turn, from poorly distributed resources, insufficient funding, and policies that tend to place highly qualified teachers and administrators in more advantaged schools. Fourth, its ultimate goal is creating the local leadership and skills needed to rebuild troubled communities. Community groups, churches and other religious organizations, and local residents are heavily involved.

How are results defined? The Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform worked with Research for Action in Philadelphia to develop indicators of success for community organizing groups (Gold, Simon, and Brown, 2002). The researchers interviewed 19 community organizing groups working on school reform and selected five for more-detailed case studies: the Alliance Organizing Project in Philadelphia, Austin Interfaith in Texas, Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago, ACORN (Association of Communities Organizing for Reform Now) in New York City, and Oakland Community Organizations in California.

Taken together, the indicators used in this study create a framework for understanding the work of community organizers and for measuring their contribution to improved student learning and stronger communities. The indicators are based on the work of the 19 groups and are drawn from their strategies and goals, as well as the accomplishments reported by some of the groups (see Table 7).

Table 7. Examples of the Reported Impact of Community Organizing, by Indicator

Indicator	Measures of Impact
Leadership development	– Parents and/or community members hold leadership positions – Parents, youth, and school staff lead meetings, design agendas, speak in public – Public officials are aware of issues that concern parents, youth, and school staff and are responsive to them
Community power	– Political and district leaders acknowledge issues important to community groups – Groups of parents and community representatives monitor new programs and policies
Social capital	– Increase in parents' sense of efficacy – Greater number of parent/community candidates for school councils – Increased participation in local organizations
Public accountability	– District data on schools and student performance become public – Parent and community representation on review board, panels, and oversight committees – Increased sense of ownership of local schools
Equity	– Increased funding for underfunded schools – Increase in GED graduates – Equity in distribution of credentialed teachers – Equity in availability of advanced courses – Reduction and equity in class size, suspensions, and expulsions
School-community connections	– Increase in variety and number of community-oriented programs based at school – Increase in participation in programs
Positive school climate	– Pride in school – Signage in other languages – Student perception that teachers care
High-quality instruction and curriculum	– Improved test scores – Increased acceptance of students into magnet programs – Availability of challenging courses – Increase in teachers' sense of efficacy – Increase in student perception that school is "relevant" and respectful of their culture

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"In practice, it became apparent that it was most reasonable to expect parents to take actions that had a logical, rather than a causal, connection to student achievement. This is mostly because it is statistically impossible to tease out the relative effects of a single initiative on student learning."

A word about this research. Of the five studies included here, four were commissioned by foundations to explore what is going on, who is doing it, and what they are accomplishing. The other is Dennis Shirley's book (1997) on community organizing in Texas. These studies are looking at early developments in a rapidly growing field. They are descriptive, and they do not attempt to evaluate the work or measure effects on student achievement. In all the studies, the main methods of gathering data were surveys, interviews, focus groups, and case studies. The only study that presents student achievement data is Shirley's book on the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The data were not analyzed in any detail, and Shirley was cautious about interpreting them.

The researchers are clearly sympathetic to what they are studying. At this stage, the studies are trying to describe the variety of organizing efforts and to create some frameworks for understanding them. The indicators framework developed by Gold, Simon, and Brown, for example, is intended both to make the work more visible and to gauge its progress.

The complexity of this work may require advanced research methods, such as path analysis, to assess its impact. For example, Mothers on the Move (MOM) in the Bronx decided to challenge the long tenure of the district superintendent and ultimately forced his removal. The district was divided into two areas, one white and middle class, the other poor and Latino. For years, the superintendent resisted making changes to improve achievement for Latinos and neglected their area of the district. The new superintendent, a Latina, has adopted several MOM-endorsed reforms. These included replacing ineffective principals and revising funding formulas. The new school leaders adopted more effective programs for teaching and learning. Since then, test scores have risen in about a third of the schools. The extent to which these gains can be credited to MOM would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine through experimental methods.

In their study of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership in Kentucky, Wilson and Corbett (2000) acknowledge this problem. "Knowledge, confidence, and willingness were the primary indicators of the [CIPL] program's success. In truth, these fell short of the Institute's original intention, which was to have the parents directly and measurably affect student achievement. In practice, it became apparent that it was most reasonable to expect parents to take actions that had a logical, rather than a causal, connection to student achievement. This is mostly because it is statistically impossible to tease out the relative effects of a single initiative on student learning" (Exective Summary, p. 12).

Studies on parent and community organizing. For their national scan of organizing, Eva Gold, Elaine Simon, and Chris Brown (2002) found 150 urban and rural community organizing groups working on school reform. In their mapping study, Mediratta, Fruchter, and their colleagues at Designs for Change, California Tomorrow, and Southern Echo found 66 organizing efforts in the eight sites they studied (New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Area, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and the Mississippi Delta). A key focus of all the groups is improving student achievement.

Mediratta and Fruchter found three major reasons for this growth:

1. New groups are emerging.
2. Older groups organizing in other areas, like housing or public safety, are taking on education issues.
3. National networks, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation and ACORN, are moving into new sites.

In Mediratta and Fruchter's view, many of these groups have had "significant success." They are training new leaders, both young people and adults. They are also focusing on the skills and knowledge needed to demand accountability and engage others with an interest in better student performance. Some accomplishments documented in this study are

- upgraded school facilities,
- improved school leadership and staffing,
- such higher-quality learning programs for students as whole-school reform models,
- new resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum, and
- new funding for after-school programs and family supports.

Dennis Shirley studied the work of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation, which has built a network called Alliance Schools in low-income urban areas. In a partnership negotiated with the Texas Education Agency, these schools are eligible for extra funding and waivers of state regulations that may block needed changes. On the Texas Assessment of Academic Standards (TAAS), students made uneven gains in the 22 schools in the Alliance network between 1993 and 1996. Ten schools made gains above the state average, some well above, but half were below. Shirley concluded:

> Even though the Alliance Schools have made headway in many areas, they have not provided a "magic bullet" solution to the myriad problems of school reform in low-income communities. . . . Yet on the other hand, as the case studies demonstrate, a host of teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders credit the Alliance School Network with revitalizing their schools and neighborhoods, and test scores hardly provide a comprehensive measure for assessing cognitive development or community improvement. (p. 220)

Studies on community engagement and constituency building. The study by Lauren Jacobs and Janice Hirota (in press) provides an overview of constituency building for school reform across the country. The researchers interviewed and met with seven national, state, or regional Ford Foundation grantees and representatives from 14 local efforts selected by the grantees. The grantees included the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Interfaith Education Fund (Texas), National Coalition of Advocates for Students, Parents for Public Schools, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, the Public Education Network, and the 21st Century Fund. Their work sites ranged from rural Kentucky to large cities like Houston and Chicago.

Although the settings are diverse, Jacobs and Hirota found that all the groups aimed to achieve three objectives:

1. Build understanding, common frameworks, and a sense of common values.
2. Create political will and establish the school system's accountability to the community.
3. Shift the dynamics of power toward more community ownership of the schools.

These organizations, and their parent and community partners, employ several key strategies:

- Build relationships so that those holding power become more willing to share it.
- Build the capacity of local school leaders to expand shared decision making.
- Broaden the power base of families and community members, including working in coalitions.
- Use the rights of free speech, assembly, due process, and access to the courts to improve the quality of schools.
- Change governance policies to give parents and community members a voice on key issues.

At Harper High School in Chicago, for example, local ACORN members identified the need for recruiting and retaining more highly qualified teachers. Looking at conditions in the school, they realized there was no working science lab, an essential for science teachers. More than 400 parents and area residents met with the chief executive officer of the Chicago schools to demand improvements. In part as a result of this pressure, the school is now undergoing a $5 million renovation, including new science labs.

The Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL), a parent leadership training program in Kentucky, is offered by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, a statewide citizen group. The institute is designed to help parents understand how Kentucky's education reform law works and how to use the law to press for better results in their schools. The six-day curriculum covers the state academic standards, data on student progress, action planning, parent engagement, and effective communications with teachers and school staff.

Bruce Wilson and Dickson Corbett (2000) assessed the impact of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership. Based on survey and interview data, the researchers found that CIPL has been an effective vehicle for

- equipping parents with valuable information about how schools should and do operate.
- instilling confidence in themselves as credible education stakeholders.
- giving them a willingness to act on the behalf of all students, not just their own.

Out of 800 CIPL participants, more than 350 sit on school-based decision-making councils or other school committees and 18 have been elected to local school boards. Over 50 percent have completed projects to improve student achievement in their schools. About 40 percent are engaged in school-improvement activities by working with the

principal and parent groups or by developing a school-improvement project. Wilson and Corbett, however, caution: "We do not know if any of this service was influenced by CIPL involvement. We certainly would not make any causal argument, although there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that they were now more comfortable in leadership roles" (p. 41).

Strategies. The community-organizing and constituency-building studies found a number of innovative strategies (Mediratta et al.; Gold, Simon, and Brown; Jacobs and Hirota). These include:

- Analyzing data on poor student outcomes to press for change and address school and district deficiencies, including low expectations, inequitable resources, and overcrowded and poorly staffed schools.
- Employing democratic methods—direct action (picketing, demonstrations), the electoral process, public meetings, and the media—to make their case to a broader public.
- Working to gain access to such decision-making groups as advisory boards, task forces, and committees to represent parent and community viewpoints. Developing a family and community agenda for change by submitting proposals and program designs.

In Texas, Shirley found that IAF organizing differs from traditional parent and community involvement in three ways. First, traditional involvement avoids issues of power and gives parents a passive role. IAF organizing develops a model of parent *engagement*, where citizens become leaders and agents of change in schools and neighborhoods. Second, the work is based in neighborhood churches. Instead of holding that churches have no role in public education, the IAF contends that religious groups are an untapped resource for community development. Third, the work is about building social capital, through grassroots strategies such as house meetings, Walks for Success, and Parents' Assemblies.

Although the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) in Kentucky offers a less confrontational approach than community organizing, Wilson and Corbett found that CIPL's parent engagement was "out of the box." CIPL-trained parent leaders developed projects to benefit their schools by

- making schools more welcoming to parents.
- easing students' transitions between schools.
- promoting literacy skills of both adults and children.
- boosting schools' technology resources.
- encouraging schools to examine achievement and attendance data for clues about pressing needs.
- bringing teachers and parents together to discuss mutual hopes for their schools.

There is a strong inside-outside tension in this work. Most research on parent and community involvement in education examines programs and practices that have been designed and run by schools. The community organizing described in these studies is

designed and implemented by community groups. It is focused on schools that are very low performing and have little or no parent and community engagement. Because it is based outside schools, is focused on accountability, and is demanding of improved performance, school administrators and teachers may see organizing as threatening and hard to control.

Certainly community organizing defines poorly performing schools and districts as ineffective and demands that the people in charge make improvements or leave. Many groups also offer to work with school and district staff to help make those improvements. The Alliance School Network in Texas is an example. The ultimate goal is collaboration, but confrontation may be required to get there. The organizers see this as democracy at work, and they are aiming to make insulated professional cultures more accountable.

> The explosive growth of organizing to improve public education, particularly in low-performing schools and districts, makes it imperative to look intensively at this burgeoning field. Understanding the methods, strategies, and achievement of organizing groups can help build broader support for education organizing, and give new groups a road map and . . . field-tested tactics for improving their schools. (Mediratta et al., p. 6)

Recommendations: Putting These Findings into Action

The studies in this review hold important implications for educational practice and research. Drawing on these, we make a series of nine recommendations. The first eight are aimed at a general audience—this includes administrators, program developers, parent and community leaders, teachers, and other school staff. The ninth is aimed specifically at researchers.

Never assume that families don't care about their children. High expectations should apply not just to students, but to teachers, school staff, and families.

Recommendation 1. Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background, are involved in their children's learning and want their children to do well in school.

Every study in this review that compared levels of parent involvement found that families of all backgrounds are equally involved at home, although the forms of involvement varied somewhat by culture and ethnicity. Every study that assessed programs to engage low-income families found that almost all were willing and able, with training, to implement practices linked to improved achievement. And every study that looked at high-performing schools in low-income areas found that parents were highly engaged. Furthermore, most studies showed that children's gains were directly related to how much their families were involved.

Always proceed on this assumption: All families can help improve their children's performance in school and influence other key outcomes that affect achievement. Families will respond to information and support about how to do this. If school staff do not agree with this statement, take a close look at staff attitudes and the reasons for them. Presenting evidence that contradicts their assumptions can help staff examine what they think.

Adopt a no-fault policy. Refrain at all times from blaming families for their children's low achievement. Never assume that families don't care about their children. High expectations should apply not just to students, but to teachers, school staff, and families. Everyone is responsible for raising achievement, and together you can do it. Consult the recommendations that follow for ideas about how to engage families who may seem reluctant.

These are ways to learn from families:

- Ask families about ways they encourage their children at home and ways to share their cultural traditions. Explore ways to enhance what families are already doing. Create small, friendly settings during occasions such as class meetings, teacher-parent conferences, grade-level potluck dinners, and family breakfasts that will encourage families to speak.
- Invite families to class to tell their education stories—what were the schools they attended like? How were their parents involved in their learning? What people and experiences helped them to learn?
- At every conference with families, ask about their expectations for their children's education. Make sure their children are enrolled in the program and taking the courses that will prepare them for that future.

Recommendation 2. Create programs that will support families to guide their children's learning, from preschool through high school.

Most programs that engage families in supporting children's learning are aimed at families with young children, from birth through preschool. More programs are needed at the elementary level and especially in middle and high school.

Adopt features from programs that are linked to gains in children's learning. Families with young children will readily respond to outreach and practices like these:

- Home visits from trained parent educators with cultural backgrounds similar to their own or with knowledge of their culture.
- Lending libraries that offer games and learning materials to build skills at home.
- Discussion groups with other families about children's learning.
- Classes on how to stimulate their children's mental, physical, and emotional development.

With families of elementary and middle school children, these practices are effective:

- Interactive homework that involves parents with their children's learning.
- Workshops on topics that parents suggest, like building their children's vocabulary, developing positive discipline strategies, and supporting children through crisis.
- Regular calls from teachers, not just when there are problems, about how their children are doing in class. Lead with something positive.
- Learning packets in reading, science, and math, as well as training in how to use them.
- Meetings with teachers to talk about their children's progress and what they're learning.

With families of high school students, offer this kind of support:

- Regular meetings with teachers and counselors to plan their children's academic program.
- Information about program options, graduation requirements, test schedules, and postsecondary education options and how to plan for them.
- Explanations of courses students should take to be prepared for college or other postsecondary education.
- Information about financing postsecondary education and applying for financial aid.

At all levels, work with families to support children in making transitions. Children of all ages do better when they make a solid adjustment to school. By adjustment, we mean that students feel comfortable and respected, feel they belong at school, and feel supported by teachers.

- Offer families and students tours of the school and opportunities to visit and observe in the classrooms.

- Meet with students and families at the feeder schools or programs to introduce staff; explain the school's programs and answer questions.
- Make home visits the summer before school starts to build a relationship with each family.
- Work with families to prepare children for the next level and help them plan for the future.

When parents feel they have the power to change and control their circumstances, children tend to do better in school. Their parents are also better equipped to help them. When schools work with families to develop their connections, families become powerful allies of the schools and advocates for public education.

Recommendation 3. Work with families to build their social and political connections.

The lack of social and political capital can seriously restrict families' capacity to support their children's learning and make sure they get a high-quality education. When parents feel they have the power to change and control their circumstances, children tend to do better in school. Their parents are also better equipped to help them. When schools work with families to develop their connections, families become powerful allies of the schools and advocates for public education.

Develop families' social capital. This capital consists of connections with neighbors, other parents in the school, and teachers. It also includes having the same vocabulary, shared rules of behavior, and resources that make these connections possible, like transportation and childcare. These activities will help build social capital:

- Promote families' connections with each other, with teachers and other school staff, and with community groups.
- Translate all communications with families into their home languages and provide an interpreter at meetings.
- Offer childcare, meals, and transportation for major activities at school.
- Ask families about the best times for them to attend events at school. Ask what kind of events they would like to attend. Ask what they think would make the school better.

Develop families' political knowledge and skills. Political capital consists of assets like understanding how the system works and how to have an effect on public decisions. It also means having access to the people who run the school system and a voice in the policymaking process. These activities will help build political capital:

- Make the school a laboratory of democracy. Support families' involvement in decision making. If you have a school governance council, offer training for parent and community members of the council.
- Ask the superintendent, board members, and district staff to meet with families at the school and explain what they do. Work with families to develop an agenda for the meetings so they can voice their concerns.
- Give families information about how the education system (and local government) works. Make field trips to district offices and school board meetings.

- Keep voter registration forms and information about local government agencies in the school office or family center. Develop a student-run voter registration drive.
- Invite candidates for school board and other local offices to speak to families at the school.

Support families' efforts to improve the school and community in these ways:

- Open the school to community meetings.
- Make home visits to ask parents their ideas about the school.
- Go with families to approach local officials about needed funding, programs, or law enforcement.
- Work with families to develop action research skills to document problems in the neighborhood.
- Approach local banks and businesses and invite them to talk with families about their services, loan programs, and employment opportunities.

Develop families' efficacy. Efficacy comes from feeling confident that they can help their children do well in school and be happy and safe. It also comes from feeling they can overcome negative influences on their children and have a positive impact on the school and neighborhood. These activities will promote families' sense of efficacy:

- Engage families in planning how they would like to be involved at school.
- Consult a representative sample of parents and families, not just the PTO leadership, about school policies and proposed actions.
- Involve families in action research. Ask them to develop and conduct surveys of other families. Invite them to observe in the classroom, review books and materials, and visit other schools to gather ideas.
- Make it easy for parents to meet and discuss concerns with the principal, talk to teachers and guidance counselors, and examine their children's school records.
- Invite families to attend staff development sessions and faculty meetings.
- Facilitate families' connections with programs for young people and youth groups.
- Work with families to help them monitor their children's activities. Create a school directory, so they can contact other parents, especially those of their children's friends.
- Offer workshops on communicating with their children with topics parents suggest, such as talking with children about drugs, dating, problems with friends or family, and values.

Recommendation 4. Develop the capacity of school staff to work with families and community members.

Increase opportunities for professional development on how to connect with families and community members. Several studies highlighted the importance of the relationship between school staff and families and school staff and community members as key to developing effective connections.

In several studies, an intervention was introduced to teachers or other school staff that shifted the level and nature of the contact between themselves and families. These shifts changed the way families felt about the school, affected their relationship with teachers, and influenced how they were involved in the educational life of their children. School staff need more support in developing ways to reach out to families and use the resources available to them in the local community.

Few teacher preparation programs include instruction on how to partner with parents and community. Such programs should be developed to include a focus on the importance of partnership with parents and community to improve student achievement. All school staff, from the principal to the custodian, need opportunities to learn more about this area.

Design preservice and inservice educational opportunities for all school staff that

- help all staff recognize the advantages of school, family, and community connections.
- explore how trusting and respectful relationships with families and community members are achieved.
- enhance school staff's ability to work with diverse families.
- enable staff to make connections with community resources.
- explore the benefits of sharing power with families and community members.

Recommendation 5. Link family and community engagement efforts to student learning.

To be effective, programs and practices that engage families should be focused in some way on improving achievement. This does *not* mean that the school should abandon engaging families in school-improvement committees or stop holding open houses and family nights. Nor does it mean that family activities should be test-preparation drills. Aim for a balance. Some activities should be designed especially to assist students to develop their knowledge and skills. Other activities can have different goals, such as building working relationships between families and teachers or connecting families to community programs. There are few activities, however, that could not focus on learning in some way.

Develop or adopt programs to engage parents in working with their children to develop specific skills. Examples of programs that are linked to learning include family literacy programs, TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork) interactive homework, and Family Math and Family Science. Use features of programs that research has linked to gains, like this sequence:

- Demonstrate an activity for parents, engaging parents in role-playing the parts.
- Give materials to each family, offering advice as they use them.
- Help parents assess children's progress and steer children to next steps.
- Lend materials to use at home.

Work with local after-school programs to link their content to what students are learning in class through activities like these:

- Form a partnership between after-school program staff and teachers. Encourage them to share ideas and knowledge about the students, observe each other at work, and attend staff development sessions to update and build their teaching skills.
- Inform them about the school's curriculum and learning programs (especially math and reading).
- Share textbooks and other learning materials.
- Give program staff information about students' progress and academic needs.

The studies suggest that educators should make every attempt to learn about the concerns of the families and how they define and perceive their role in the school.

Link the school's traditional staples of parent involvement to learning with activities like these:

- Incorporate information on standards and exhibits of student work at open houses and back-to-school nights.
- Engage parents and students in math and reading games at Family Nights. Explain where students' skills need to be stronger. Use scoring guides in such projects as making kites to let parents know what a scoring guide is and how to use it.
- Use the school newsletter to discuss test results and how students are doing to meet higher standards.

Recommendation 6. Focus efforts to engage families and community members in developing trusting and respectful relationships.

A theme repeated again and again in the studies is that relationships are key. Any attempt to form genuine collaborations among school staff, parents, and community members must start with building relationships of respect. The building of relationships must be intentional and consistent. When outreach efforts reflect a sincere desire to engage parents and community members as partners in children's education, the studies show that they respond positively.

Respect cultural and class differences. Increasingly, the communities served by public schools are diverse in terms of class, ethnicity, and culture. The studies suggest that educators should make every attempt to learn about the concerns of the families and how they define and perceive their role in the school. If parents don't attend activities arranged by school staff and held at the school, the school should not assume that "parents don't care."

Instead, educators should explore other avenues that better reflect the communities' priorities. Parents and community members feel respected when educators attempt to understand and relate to their needs. Chrispeels and Rivero (2000) point out the value of teachers' learning how to become cultural brokers and cross cultural boundaries.

Allocate resources to build relationships and support parent and community involvement. This work takes time and consistent financial support. Outreach to families, materials to lend, and referrals to social and medical services all require extra staff support. Multiple pressures on school budgets often mean competition for resources. When test pressures increase, parent and community involvement may be seen as expendable, unless there is line-item protection in the budget. Time and patience are also required.

Partnership means sharing power with families and community members. Both lose interest in partnering with schools when their participation is token.

Adopt simple but effective practices of teacher outreach to families. One study found three practices that were related to gains in elementary students' reading and math scores:

- Meeting face to face.
- Sending materials on ways to help their child at home.
- Telephoning both routinely and when a child was having problems.

Allow school staff the resources and time to create programs that

- invite and welcome parents and community members.
- honor the contributions and accomplishments, no matter how large or small, of families and community members.
- connect families and community members to learning goals for children.

Recommendation 7. Embrace a philosophy of partnership and be willing to share power with families. Make sure that parents, school staff, and community members understand that the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise.

Adopt a philosophy that family and community engagement is a key component of your whole school reform plan. Several studies found that when school, family, and community connection initiatives were a part of a comprehensive plan to improve student achievement, the programs engaged and sustained the involvement of families and community members and organizations. Some of the studies found a relationship between these more comprehensive approaches and better outcomes for students.

Find workable ways to involve families and community members in planning, establishing policy, and making decisions. Partnership means sharing power with families and community members. Both lose interest in partnering with schools when their participation is token. Try the following:

- Explore national school reform initiatives with a comprehensive approach that includes a school, family, and community component.
- Provide training for school decision-making groups on how to work effectively.
- Avoid using parents and community members to merely rubberstamp decisions.

Recommendation 8. Build strong connections between schools and community organizations.

Connections to community groups can expand the resources available to schools for both staff and families. The community-organizing studies are full of examples of collaboration between school leaders and community groups that have contributed to improved facilities, more funding resources, higher-quality academic programs, improved social and health services, and new after-school programs.

Work with community organizations to offer programs that encourage reading, writing, and studying during evenings, weekends, and summer. Involve them in your school council or school-improvement team. Youth-serving agencies (like the Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA) and religious organizations can help schools support student achievement by:

- providing tutoring and academic support linked to the school's curriculum.
- helping students to organize and manage their time effectively.
- teaching study skills and how to use reference materials and other educational materials.
- advising families about planning for their children's future education and career.

Open the school to community groups and agencies that can offer services to families through a family resource center. Invite them to serve on your school council or school-improvement team. Here are examples of supports and services they can offer for families and community members:

- Health care and mental health services.
- Targeted academic assistance to struggling students.
- Family literacy, adult education, and high school equivalency programs.
- Job training, career counseling, and other vocational services.
- Recreation, arts, and social activities.

Collaborate with community-organizing groups that want to improve the school. Be willing to let them help set the agenda for change. They can put pressure on the school district and elected officials for new resources in ways that school staff cannot. Teachers and principals in low-performing schools in urban areas have worked with local organizers by:

- Opening the doors to community action research teams seeking to assess the quality and safety of school facilities.
- Meeting with parents, family members, and community residents organized by these groups to discuss making improvements to teaching and learning at the school.
- Assisting parents and community members in researching and adopting academic programs that will enrich the school's curriculum.
- Designing new, improved school facilities that include science labs and family centers.

- Writing grant proposals to the National Science Foundation and other funders for new programs.
- Developing designs for new small schools in existing schools and other facilities.
- Negotiating with district officials to create school-improvement zones eligible for increased professional development, more resources for parent engagement, and new reading programs.

Coordinate efforts to reach families with community organizations, including religious groups. Such groups have worked to engage families by:

- Conducting house calls and neighborhood walks to identify the key issues in the neighborhood and school and identify local leaders.
- Holding focus groups and other small meetings to discuss pressing concerns and talk about how to solve them.
- Providing training for parents and residents about how the system works, the larger context for their issues, and how to use their power.
- Showing demonstrations of support for the local school.
- Arranging large meetings for parents and residents and inviting public officials to meet with the community. The goal is to obtain support for a community-developed agenda (repairs, increased funding, after-school programs) and show the strength of the community.

Recommendation 9. Design and conduct research that is more rigorous and focused, and that uses more culturally sensitive and empowering definitions of parent involvement.

The recently published book, *Scientific Research in Education* (National Research Council, 2002), puts forward some criteria for research to be balanced and rigorous. We recommend following this useful framework:

- Pose significant questions that can be investigated empirically.
- Link research to relevant theory.
- Use methods that permit direct investigation of the question.
- Provide a coherent and explicit chain of reasoning.
- Replicate and generalize across studies.
- Disclose research to encourage professional scrutiny and critique.

Use different types of research methods to shed light on all the questions and issues in this complex field.

- Develop a more balanced array of descriptive, correlational, and experimental studies. Include more policy studies that look at the links between local, state, and federal policies, including funding.
- Increase experimental studies, using random assignment to treatment and control groups. Be sure the two groups are evenly matched and that related interventions

are not made with control-group children during the study period. Seek or provide additional funding and develop new partnerships between practitioners and researchers to allow for experimental studies.

- Look at achievement data when conducting case studies on family-school interactions and effective practice in high-performing schools. Several studies we considered neglected to examine whether practices that were successful in increasing parent and family engagement were related to improvements in student outcomes.

Include more information about school practices to engage families in future federal data collection. Add questions about how parents are involved in advocacy and decision making, in analysis of student performance data, and in school improvement.

Explore how practices to engage families can enhance reform measures to improve achievement and close the achievement gap. For example:

- How do school reform programs engage families? Do those practices (or lack of them) have an impact on their results? Would increasing the amount of family engagement in ways that are linked to learning improve these results?
- Small schools and smaller class sizes are considered promising approaches to improve achievement. Is there solid evidence that they do? If so, is it related to increased capacity to engage families? What are small schools' practices to engage families and connect to community groups? Do teachers with smaller classes make more connections with families? Do these practices appear to have an impact on achievement?

Expand how parent and family involvement are defined in the research. Current definitions are limited and outdated. Studies that use only one or two markers for involvement (for example, frequency of contacts with the school and attendance at activities) miss the broader and more realistic range of activities that might be part of a more inclusive definition.

- Recognize that the forms of parent and family involvement shift constantly, from home to school, as children move through the grade levels, as family social and economic status changes, and as children do better or more poorly. For many children, other relatives and neighbors play a parent's role.
- Probe cultural variations. What are the concerns of families from diverse cultures? How are they involved at home? How do they feel about being engaged at school? How do their home cultures contribute to student learning? What are some ways that schools can learn more about their families, understand their values, and build on their strengths?
- Look at issues of family and community power and influence. Develop deeper, stronger definitions of decision making and advocacy. In many recent studies, participation in the PTO and contacts with school staff are the only ways these roles are defined.
  - How are parents advocates for their children—speaking out for them, intervening if they are doing poorly or being treated unfairly, working with school

staff to solve problems? Do schools have processes and procedures to support this role?

- How are families involved in decisions about their children's program and placement? In decisions about efforts to improve achievement? In other policies that affect their children?
- How do schools recognize and act on their accountability to families? Do they report on student progress? On school-improvement plans?

Investigate a greater variety of forms of family and community engagement. The No Child Left Behind Act and state standards-based reform laws have changed the framework for family-school relationships.

- How are schools and districts implementing new policies that require them to engage families in more substantive ways? How are they sharing school performance data? What roles do families play on decision-making councils and school-improvement teams? How are families involved in improving student achievement and school performance?
- What is the impact of new practices such as community discussions, deliberative dialogues, focus groups, and study circles?
- Do family resource centers, by connecting families with social services and creating more ways to engage with schools, have an impact on student achievement?
- Do general school policies and practices rather than just specific programs and interventions engage families?
- What kind of family and community engagement policies have been adopted by schools and districts? Do they support specific practices? If so, which ones? Are the policies linked to programs and other efforts to raise student achievement? Are they backed by resources and other policies?
- What practices are in standard use by most schools? Are they effective in engaging diverse families? Are they related to improved outcomes for students?
- What changes or additions to these practices would make them more effective, both in engaging families and improving student achievement?
- How could these practices be better linked to learning?
- What do parents think about these practices? What do they feel schools could be doing to support them to be more involved in their children's learning?

Study how families attempt to influence schools and become more involved. Look at the variations by race, class, and cultural background.

- How do parents act as advocates for their children? What is their experience as they try to work with teachers to make sure their children are learning to high standards? To get help for their children if they are falling behind or experiencing problems in school? To guide their children toward more challenging programs and placements? To plan for their children's future education?
- In what kinds of decisions do parents and families seek a voice? What do they see as their proper role in selecting a principal, adopting a whole school-reform pro-

gram, designing a school-improvement plan, and increasing students' test performance? What happens when they try to have an influence?

- How do parents try to collaborate with educators? What do they want to know about new teaching methods and learning programs? About standards and school reform? How would they like to learn more about education? What support would they like to be able to examine data on student performance and other outcomes and use school report cards and state Web sites more effectively?
- In what ways are families engaged in school improvement? How do they respond to opportunities to join school councils and committees? What supports do they need to take part effectively? Are schools receptive to this kind of engagement, and in what ways? Are families active in building more community support for better schools? What are the important issues in the community?

Conclusion

This report contains a very different mix of studies from those in the 1994 review, *A New Generation of Evidence* (Henderson and Berla). First, there is far more research on parent involvement in middle and high school and on how involvement shifts as children grow older. There are also more studies of how parent involvement varies by social class, gender, and ethnicity.

When families of all backgrounds are engaged in their children's learning, their children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and pursue higher education. Clearly, children at risk of failure or poor performance can profit from the extra support that engaged families and communities provide.

Second, there is a growing body of research about effective practice at schools. In 1994, the new trend was such national program models for engaging families as Parents As Teachers and the Quality Education Program. Now, in addition to research on such interventions, there are close studies of high-achieving schools. These look at the many ways families are engaged in improving student achievement—and in making schools better.

Third, community organizing and constituency building for school reform have opened a new arena of research. This form of involvement is based outside schools, reflects parent and community priorities, and is led by local parents and residents. Aimed at improving low-income schools, it is part of a movement to build power in low-income communities and hold local officials accountable for poor performance. These recent developments in the field have considerable implications for theory and practice.

When we combine these recent studies with earlier research, we see strong and steadily growing evidence that families can improve their children's academic performance in school. Families also have a major impact on other key outcomes, such as attendance and behavior, that affect achievement. When families of all backgrounds are engaged in their children's learning, their children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and pursue higher education. Clearly, children at risk of failure or poor performance can profit from the extra support that engaged families and communities provide.

All students, but especially those in middle and high school, would benefit if schools support parents in helping children at home and in guiding their educational career. Studies that look at high-achieving students of all backgrounds found that their parents encourage them, talk with them about school, help them plan for higher education, and keep them focused on learning and homework. The continuity that this constant support provides helps students through changes of school, program, and grade level.

This does *not* mean, however, that parent involvement at school is unimportant. It means that the ways parents are involved at school should be linked to improving learning, developing students' skills in specific subjects, and steering students toward more challenging classes. Parent involvement programs should also be designed to develop close working relationships between families and teachers.

The studies identified several ways that schools can assist families in developing their capacity to support their children's education:

- Engage them at school so they understand what their children are learning.
- Give them a voice in what happens to their children.
- Provide information about how to help their children at home, what their children need to learn, and how to plan for college, postsecondary education, and a career.
- Foster social connections among families and with teachers.
- Build families' understanding of the education system and how to guide their children through it successfully.
- Offer access to social services and community agencies.
- Identify and build on strengths in the community and among families.

How can a school use these findings to engage families in improving student achievement?

- Adopt a family-school partnership policy. The philosophy behind it should see the total school community as committed to making sure that every single student succeeds at a high level and to working together to make that happen.
- Identify target areas of low achievement. Work with families to design workshops and other activities to give them information about how to help their children. Lend learning materials for families to use at home. Get their ideas for how to help their children learn.
- Offer professional development for school staff on working productively with families. Invite families to attend.
- Look at your current parent involvement program. How is it linked to learning? Work with families and teachers to add a learning component to every activity and communication for families. Think about new and different activities that will create a learning community.

Studies that offer helpful information: Clark, 1993; Epstein, Simon, and Salinas; Miedel and Reynolds; Van Voorhis; and Westat and Policy Studies Associates.

How can an elementary school link with preschool programs and middle schools to create a steady structure of support for families across transitions?

- Check your students' kindergarten readiness. Map the early childhood programs in your community. Do most children in the community have access to such programs? Are they designed to teach children the skills they will need as they enter school? Compare them to designs for high-quality programs that work with families. If these programs need to be redesigned or expanded, draw up a plan with your families and community supporters and present it to the district.
- Develop ties with the middle schools your students will attend. Invite them to send some staff to meet with your families, at your school, to talk about the middle school. Develop some strategies with their staff about preparing children so that when they leave middle school, they will be ready for challenging academic work in high school. Suggest that the middle school do the same with their feeder high schools.

Studies that offer helpful information: Baker et al., Kagitcibasi et al./HIPPY, Jordan et al./ Project EASE, Mathematica/Early Head Start, Starkey and Klein/Head Start Family Math, Gutman and Midgley, and Catsambis.

How can a school connect to community groups to develop more supports for student learning?

- Contact local community groups and ask them for help. They can do outreach with families to let them know what is happening at school and encourage them to attend events and activities. They can help press the district for more resources to accomplish your achievement plan. They can recruit and train volunteers and staff for your school and for after-school programs.
- Map the after-school and summer learning programs in your community. Is their content linked to the school's curriculum? Are their staff aware of your students' academic skills that need strengthening? If not, invite them to the school, share curriculum materials with them, and go over the performance data. Establish a partnership to monitor student progress.

Studies that offer helpful information: Clark, 2002; Mediratta and Fruchter; Shirley; Wilson and Corbett; Dryfoos; Invernizzi; and Newman.

Final Points

While engaging families can help improve student achievement, it is not enough to overcome the deficits of low-quality schools. We also need high-quality initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Joyce Epstein and her colleagues made these points in their 1997 study of a family-school partnership program in Baltimore. Although they found that a well-implemented program of partnerships may help boost student skills, they also cautioned that in many urban districts, "fewer than 20 percent of students reach satisfactory scores on the state's new assessments in writing, reading, or math. School, family, and community partnerships can boost attendance and increase achievement slightly, but excellent classroom teaching will be needed to dramatically improve students' writing, reading, and math skills to meet the state's standards. . . " (p. 4).

The studies reviewed in this report suggest that the high-quality programs and school reform efforts needed in these districts will be more effective if they engage families. They also suggest that efforts to engage families will be more effective in improving achievement if they are part of a reform program. Engaging families and community organizations should be considered an essential part of any strategy to narrow the achievement gap between middle-class white students and low-income students and students of color.

The potential of family and community involvement to raise student achievement is in the spotlight as never before. The No Child Left Behind Act, passed and signed into law in 2001, is the largest federal commitment ever made to improving elementary and secondary education. Not only does it mandate that all students achieve competence in the core subjects, it also requires annual testing to measure progress and holds the schools accountable for results. If a school does not improve, parents may request that their children be moved to another, more-effective school. Increased parent and family involvement is a key lever in the accountability mechanism of the law.

The No Child Left Behind Act updates the federal Title I program and has important provisions for engaging families that schools and school districts must observe. All schools receiving Title I funds must follow these requirements:

- Develop a written parent involvement policy with parents and approved by parents. This policy must include how it will build the school's capacity to engage families, address barriers to their involvement, and coordinate parent involvement in other programs.
- Notify parents and the community about this policy "in an understandable and uniform format."
- Use at least 1 percent of the school's Title I funds to develop a parent involvement program. This money can be used for a wide range of activities—to hire parent liaisons, hold workshops and meetings, provide transportation and childcare, and make home visits. The law defines parent involvement as activities that "improve student academic achievement and school performance."

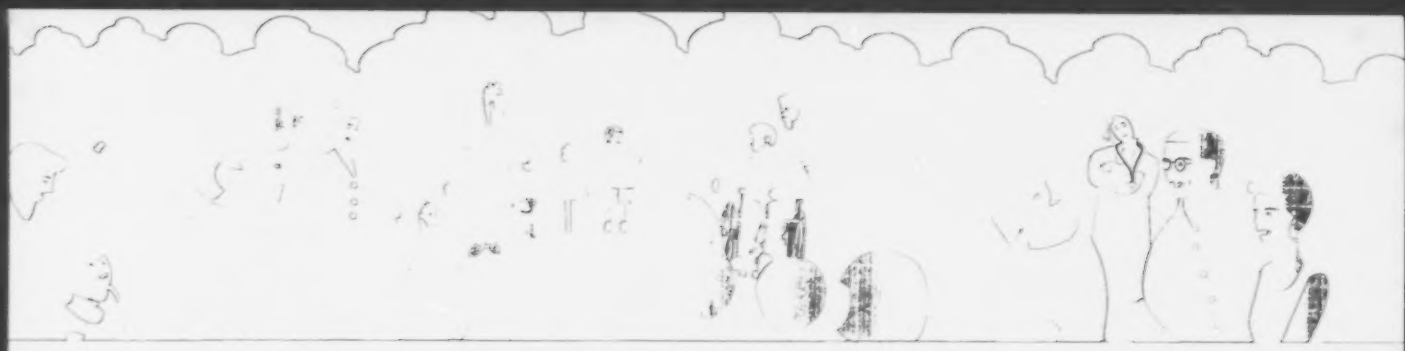
- Describe and explain the school's curriculum, standards, and assessments.
- Develop a parent-school compact, or agreement, about how families and the school will collaborate to ensure children's progress.
- Give parents detailed information on student progress at the school.

If a school is identified as low-performing, it must:

- Notify parents that the school has been designated as needing improvement and explain how parents can become involved in addressing the academic issues that resulted in the low performance.
- Inform parents that their children are eligible for supplemental services, arrange for those services, and make sure parents are informed regularly of their child's progress.

This legislation signals a clear and growing commitment to the role of families, not just to improve achievement, but to hold schools accountable for results. The law also gives schools significant resources to make the changes necessary to educate all children to high standards. Placing the findings of the research in this review into practice can help all schools build the partnership with families that will make this law work. Doing so could begin the process of community renewal in poor, urban, and rural districts across our country.

We hope that this information will assist educators, parent and community leaders, researchers, and policymakers in designing effective programs, research studies, and funding priorities. We believe that we all have the same end in mind: safe, nurturing, high-achieving schools that profit from their diversity and are powerful assets to their communities.



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1

Baker, Amy J. L., Piotrkowski, Chaya S., and Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne (1998) EJ580313

The Effects of the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) on Children's School Performance at the End of the Program and One Year Later *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 13*(4), 571–588

Summary: This long-term experimental study examined outcomes for 182 HIPPY program and control-group children in New York. The study covers two cohorts of children over the course of the two-year program and one year later (at the end of first grade). The results were mixed. For Cohort I, the researchers found positive gains in the HIPPY children's school performance both at the end of the program and in first grade, compared with the control group. For Cohort II, there were no significant differences between the HIPPY and control children.

This study looks at the impact of the HIPPY program over and above the impact of the children's classroom experience.

HIPPY is a free two-year program, delivered through home visits, to provide educational enrichment to poor and immigrant families with four- and five-year-old children. During the program, mothers receive a series of books written for HIPPY, along with activity packets. The activities, each organized like a lesson plan that mothers follow, are designed to develop skills in three major areas: language, sensory and perceptual discrimination, and problem solving.

During biweekly home visits, a trained paraprofessional models the lesson through role-play. Mothers read the books to their children, then engage them in the activities. The home visitors, recruited from backgrounds similar to their assigned families, are trained and supervised by professional HIPPY coordinators.

The HIPPY program studied is based in a large city in New York. It is offered as a component of the school district's Early Childhood Center. All families in the study took part in the preschool program during the first year and enrolled in kindergarten during the second year. This study looks at the impact of the HIPPY program over and above the impact of the children's classroom experience. Volunteer families were assigned randomly to HIPPY or a control group.

Trained research assistants collected baseline data during home visits. At the end of the second program year, they assessed children's cognitive skills. In addition, children's performance in kindergarten and first grade was assessed through test scores, school records, and teacher ratings of classroom adaptation. Baseline and postprogram cognitive skills were assessed using the Cooperative Preschool Inventory (CPI). The test scores were from the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT) and the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT). Regression analysis (ANCOVA) found no significant differences (age, gender, ethnicity, attrition, and family background) between the two cohorts.

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Findings

At the end of the program, the HIPPY children in Cohort I scored significantly higher on the CPI than control children. This finding did not appear in Cohort II. On the MRT, given in kindergarten, there were no differences between the HIPPY and control groups in either cohort. In first grade, teachers found that HIPPY children in Cohort I had adapted better to school than the control children. This finding also did not appear in Cohort II. For the year-after follow-up, HIPPY children in Cohort I scored higher on the MAT than control children. Yet again, this finding did not appear in Cohort II.

At the end of the program, the HIPPY children in Cohort I scored significantly higher on the CPI than control children.

Table 8. Overview of Effects in HIPPY Cohorts (mean scores)

Outcomes	Cohort I		Cohort II	
	HIPPY	Control	HIPPY	Control
End of Program				
Reading	47.6	41.6	44.2	45.8
Math	52.0	43.7	46.8	51.3
Classroom Adaptation	3.7	2.8	3.2	3.4
One Year Later				
Reading	54.2	38.1	52.4	50.9
Math	55.6	48.6	56.5	58.3
Classroom Adaptation	3.6	2.8	3.5	3.4

Analyses of the two cohorts to determine if differences between the two groups could explain the disparity in results did not reveal an answer. The researchers considered attrition, differences in the populations, and different levels of participation in the program. These did not differ significantly between the two cohorts.

Conclusions

Findings from Cohort I found that HIPPY children scored higher on important measures of school success than the control group. They outperformed their peers on both tests and teacher ratings. These positive effects were over and above those of their preschool and kindergarten experience. These findings are promising because research suggests that children who start out as high performers tend to remain that way, while children who have a poor start tend to remain poor students. If a high-quality home support program can help low-income children gain skills beyond those contributed by preschool programs, their prospects for success later in school will be improved.

Because these results did not appear in Cohort II, these conclusions are tentative. Their analysis of the data led the researchers to conclude that "we may be seeing naturally occurring variations on the effects of programs within communities . . . Clearly more research on HIPPY is called for in order to account for these mixed results. Our find-

ings also alert us to the importance of replication studies and caution us about generalizing positive or negative results from single-sample, single-site evaluations" (p. 584).

In addition, Baker and her colleagues recommend that research follow HIPPY families to determine longer-term effects. Gains from participation may grow or decline over time. If they decline, there may be a need for follow-up services to assist children in making the transition to formal schooling. Research can also examine how parents are affected by the program and what impact that has on children. Perhaps, they suggest, certain groups of families are more likely to benefit from the program than others. Ideally, HIPPY families will have higher expectations for their children and apply their skills to support learning throughout their children's time in school.

2

Baker, Amy J. L., and Soden, Laura M. (1997) ED407127

Parent Involvement in Children's Education: A Critical Assessment of the Knowledge Base
Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL, 1997

Summary: This paper reviews more than 200 studies, reviews, papers, and articles on parent involvement and raises important issues about their quality and rigor. The authors conclude with recommendations for researchers.

The reviewers identify several issues in the quality and rigor of the 108 empirical studies about engaging parents in their children's education.

The 200 studies reviewed in this paper fall into two basic categories: non-empirical (not based on direct research) and empirical. The 67 non-empirical articles included opinion papers, program descriptions, articles about theory, and reviews of research. The 145 empirical studies include 37 that describe the benefits of parent involvement for parents, and 108 examine the link between parent involvement and student achievement.

Findings

The reviewers identify several issues in the quality and rigor of the 108 empirical studies about engaging parents in their children's education:

- Using a true experimental design. Children are assigned randomly to a program group and a control group, and tested before and after the intervention to compare results. Only three of the studies met this standard.
- Isolating the effects of engaging parents from other components of the program, or other influences.
- Defining parent involvement consistently. Some defined "parent involvement" as parent aspirations; others as activities at home (helping with homework) or at school (attending events, meeting with teachers); still others as parenting styles or behaviors. Reliable measuring tools have not been developed for any framework or definition.
- Using objective measures of parent involvement, rather than parent, student, or teacher reports. Only 27 of these studies used objective measures or direct observation.

> Closed-ended self-report surveys cannot fully capture the dynamic transactional nature of parents' involvement in their children's education. Many of these processes could better be explored through open-ended and observational techniques which would produce rich data, shed light on complex processes, and generate new hypotheses. (p. 15)

> It is not surprising that program evaluations were empirically weak. Indeed, they may be the most challenging form of applied educational field research that exists. In addition to the constraints of conducting research in an applied setting, program evalua-

> tions pose special obstacles for the researcher. Interventions are typically applied to special needs populations (such as at-risk students, low-income families, and families with limited English proficiency) heightening clinical and ethical issues. (pp. 15–16)

In many cases program evaluation must be paid out of the program budget, which is difficult in a setting where the needs of the program take priority over the demands of science (p. 16).

"While the research evidence is less than conclusive, years of practice wisdom, theory, and related areas of research . . . all strongly suggest that parent involvement in their children's formal schooling is vital for their academic success."

Recommendations for future research

The authors suggest that research in each of these areas is needed to provide new evidence of the impact of parent involvement on student achievement:

- Use experimental procedures, whenever possible. This will require more funding and new levels of partnership between program staff and researchers.
- Isolate the specific effects of parent involvement. This will require measuring the type and level of parent involvement separately from other aspects of the program and assessing the difference when the content is delivered by a parent or another adult.
- Clarify the definition of parent involvement. This will require being specific about how that type of involvement is being measured and how it fits into the larger field.
- Measure parent behavior objectively. This will require direct observation of parent behavior and standard data-collection tools.
- Represent family influences accurately. This will require expanding the measure to include adults other than just the mother.
- Examine relationships among parent involvement, student achievement, and gender.
- Take into account the complex and transactional nature of interrelationships between parent involvement and its outcomes.

Conclusions

"While the research evidence is less than conclusive, years of practice wisdom, theory, and related areas of research . . . all strongly suggest that parent involvement in their children's formal schooling is vital for their academic success" (p. 17). In particular, the cumulative knowledge of the studies reviewed suggest the importance of these types of involvement:

- A stimulating literacy and material environment.
- High expectations and moderate levels of parent support and supervision.
- Monitoring of TV viewing and homework completion.
- Joint learning activities at home.
- Emphasis on effort rather than ability.
- Promoting of independence and self-reliance.

3

Balli, Sandra J., Demo, David H., and Wedman, John F. (1998) EJ573101

Family Involvement with Children's Homework: An Intervention in the Middle Grades
Family Relations, 47(2), 149–157

Summary: The study looked at a mathematics homework intervention that was designed to increase family involvement in homework. The study was based in three mathematics classes taught by the same teacher, with students who were similar in achievement level. Families of students who were prompted to involve a family member in the homework (by directions on involvement and requests for parents' comments and signature) were significantly more involved in mathematics homework than families who did not receive prompts. There were no significant differences in posttest achievement.

Researchers investigated how differences in levels of family involvement in homework and in student achievement on a posttest were related to differential prompts for involvement in homework. The only variable manipulated in the study was prompting for family involvement. In the three sixth-grade mathematics classes she taught, a teacher distributed 20 homework assignments that required students to interact with a family member. By random selection, some students received assignments prompting them with "directions on how to involve a family member," some received assignments that also prompted families to write comments and requested a parent signature, and some received no prompts.

Participants were 74 Caucasian sixth graders (31 boys and 43 girls) and their predominately middle-class families. The three mathematics classes were nearly identical in terms of students' previous mathematical achievement, with similar ranges of academic ability and family background.

The teacher gave out 20 homework assignments that required students to interact with a family member and randomly assigned students to one of three groups. In Group 1, students received no prompts to involve family in the homework; students in Group 2 were prompted to involve family members; and in Group 3, not only were students prompted to involve family, but family members were also prompted to be involved. Students were tested before and after the intervention. Additional data were gathered from surveys completed by all students about family involvement in homework and from parents' written comments and telephone interviews.

Multivariate and regression analyses of the data were conducted to assess the effects of the differential prompts, compare mean mathematics scores on the pretest and posttest, and determine influences of the prompts and selected demographic variables (family structure, family size, and parent educational level) on family involvement with mathematics homework.

Findings

Each student completed all 20 homework assignments. Parents in groups 2 and 3 reported significantly more family involvement in mathematics homework than Group 1. Evidence of differences in family involvement between groups 2 and 3 was mixed: while parents reported no significant differences, students reported that family members were much more involved with homework for Group 3 than for Group 2. The study found no differences in involvement based on family size or family education level, nor was posttest achievement correlated with the demographic variables. Achievement on the posttest was explained more by achievement on the pretest than by parent involvement in homework. From the comments of parents, the study also found that families benefited from workshops and other homework help since many of them were not taught the concepts or were not taught in the same way as their children.

The authors found that "although the intervention significantly increased family involvement [in students' mathematics homework], the increases in children's achievement directly attributable to family involvement were not powerful enough to be statistically significant."

Conclusions

The authors found that "although the intervention significantly increased family involvement [in students' mathematics homework], the increases in children's achievement directly attributable to family involvement were not powerful enough to be statistically significant" (p. 154). They suggest that this is because of the small sample. They did find a pattern of higher homework scores in Group 3, with prompts for involvement from both students and teachers, as compared with Group 2, which had only student prompts and Group 1, which had no prompts for family involvement in mathematics homework. The data suggest that if prompted by both teachers and students, parents are more likely to be involved with homework, a finding that is contrary to trends in the literature that report a decline of parent involvement in middle school.

4

Catsambis, Sophia (1998) ED426174

Expanding Knowledge of Parental Involvement in Secondary Education—Effects on High School Academic Success
Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR (Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk), Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 27
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report27entire.htm

Summary: Using a large, long-term national database, the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS: 88), sponsored by the National Center of Education Statistics, this study examined effects of Epstein's six types of parent involvement in the high school setting. It found that the strongest effects on 12th-grade student achievement stemmed from parents' actively encouraging their children to plan for and attend college. The effects are weakest for reading and strongest for math.

Parent involvement in education takes many forms, and some may have more impact on achievement than others. Using Epstein's six types of parent involvement as a base, Catsambis defines high school parent involvement as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Activities Related to Six Types of Parent Involvement

Type 1. Parent obligations	– Parent-teen communication – Parent-teen activities – Supervising behavior – Knowing what courses student is taking – Supervising academic work
Type 1. Parent obligations	– School-parent contacts about academic performance – Parent-school contacts on student's academic program – Parent-school contacts on postsecondary plans – Problems communicating with school
Type 2. Communications	– Volunteering at school and attending school activities
Type 3. Supporting school	– Encouraging college – Encouraging high school graduation – Learning about postsecondary education
Type 4. Learning activities	– Private educational expenses
Type 5. Decision making	Not included in the NELS:88 12th-grade questionnaire
Type 6. Community	– Parent-to-parent communication

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Using data from the long-term NELS:88, this study tracked the behavior of 13,580 parents whose children remained in school through the 12th grade. Catsambis measured the impact each type of involvement had on student achievement. Student achievement was measured by standardized test scores and total credits completed in math, English, and science. Also included was enrollment in an academic (higher level) high school curriculum.

This study confirms the importance of considering the many dimensions of parent involvement in education. Within Epstein's six types of parent involvement, only some have a significant positive effect on achievement in high school.

Catsambis compared families by their social background (race, education, job, and income) and composition (size, number of parents in the home and working) to see if these factors affected how parents interact with school and their children. She also compared students by their language background (English spoken at home or not), engagement in school (attendance, homework completed, tardiness), and achievement record. The study considers the effects to be significant only if they appear in families of all backgrounds.

Findings

This study confirms the importance of considering the many dimensions of parent involvement in education. Within Epstein's six types of parent involvement, only some have a significant positive effect on achievement in high school.

First, Catsambis looked at the impact of parent involvement while their teens were in 12th grade. She found that parenting practices tend to have weak effects on students' test scores. Knowledge of their students' coursework and monitoring their progress have "very small positive effects." In 12th grade, three forms of involvement have very limited or no effects. These are communicating with school, supporting the school by attending events, and communicating with other parents.

Enhancing learning opportunities at home has the strongest effect. When parents express high expectations, discuss attending college, and help students prepare for college, students are more likely to enroll in an academic program, earn credits, and make higher test scores. This finding holds across all family backgrounds. The impact was somewhat greater for math and science than for English, and for earning credits than scoring well on tests.

Second, Catsambis looked back at the parents' type of involvement when their children were in eighth grade. Do activities in middle school have an impact on 12th-grade achievement? She found that parents' educational expectations (for high achievement and attending college) in eighth grade had the strongest effects on 12th-grade test scores in all subjects.

For some activities, the effects appeared to be negative. In families where parents were making contact with the school, encouraging their teens to graduate from high school (as opposed to attend college), and supervising behavior, student achievement was lower. When she controlled for problem behavior (coming to school late or unpre-

pared, cutting classes), the negative effects disappeared. This suggests that parents whose children have academic or behavior problems tend to seek help from the school.

Conclusions

The author concludes that:

- Parent involvement does influence educational outcomes in the 12th grade, but its effects are weaker than those reported for earlier grades.
- Parents' educational expectations and encouragement are "by far the most important type of family practice that affects all measures of senior achievement."
- Other family practices that support learning at home also have a positive effect, especially being aware of the courses their students are taking. However, parenting activities have only small effects at this age.
- In general, the most effective types of 12th-grade parent involvement are not aimed at supervising students' behavior, but rather are aimed at advising and guiding teens' academic decisions.

> High educational expectations, consistent encouragement and actions that enhance learning opportunities of students and, to a lesser extent, support by the school and other parents, are the major ways through which families . . . positively influence the educational achievements of their teens . . . The results confirm that maintaining high levels of parent involvement in students' education from the middle grades to the last year of high school does "make a difference." School efforts to encourage sustained parent involvement through the twelfth grade may therefore be a fruitful avenue for improving students' educational success. (p. 26)

5

Chrispeels, Janet, and Rivero, Elvira (2000)

Engaging Latino Families for Student Success—Understanding the Process and Impact of Providing Training to Parents
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA

Summary: The study examined the impact of a program intervention called the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) on a group of 198 Latino immigrant parents in San Diego, California. The researchers explored the effect of participation in a series of parent information classes on immigrant parents' sense of place in their children's education. The findings from their study suggest that parents developed higher levels of engagement both with their children and with the school, especially with the teachers, as a result of participation in the PIQE program.

The PIQE program consisted of eight 90-minute sessions using a prescribed curriculum translated into the parents' language. An important component of the training was the use of PIQE instructors who acted as "cultural brokers." The researchers adopted this term from Delgado-Gaitán (1996), who used the term to refer to a white educator who, because of his long affiliation with the Latino community, was able to translate between his ethnic and cultural group and the Latinos. The instructors selected for the program were from backgrounds and life experiences similar to the participants, had succeeded in the U.S. system, and could interpret this system for the Latino parents.

The researchers assessed parents' perceptions of their role and place in their children's education before and after their participation in the program. Data collection included pretest and posttest survey data, observations and videotapes of the training sessions, in-depth interviews, and a review of artifacts. There were 198 graduates of the PIQE program (those who had attended at least four of the six content sessions). Data included surveys from 95 families and interviews with 11 families.

Chrispeels had developed her own conceptual framework of parent-community-school partnerships (in 1992 and 1994) encompassing five major types of interactive relationships involving (1) two-way communication, (2) support of the child, family, and the school—including meeting the child's basic needs, (3) learning about each other and how to work together, (4) sharing teaching responsibilities, and (5) collaborating in decision making and advocacy.

The work of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) and Reed, Jones, Walker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2000) provided a second framework that guided the study. They describe three factors that motivate parents to be involved that, they argue, explain why some families are more engaged with schools than others. These factors are how

1. parents define their role, responsibilities, and place in their child's life.

2. parents perceive the strength of their capabilities.
3. parents perceive the school invitations, demands, and opportunities for parent involvement.

Findings

All families in the survey reported shifts in their parenting styles as a result of their participation. They attributed changes in their discipline methods, communication within the family and with teachers, and increased awareness of how to build the child's self-esteem to the information PIQE gave them. One of the most prevalent changes in this study was the increased number of literacy activities (such as reading more and going to the library more frequently) for both adults and children. A major discovery by parents was that they could initiate contact with the school and did not have to wait for the teacher to extend an invitation. The study suggests that parents will shift their parenting styles and their engagement with the school, especially with the teacher, when given information and an opportunity to explore how their attitudes and practices affect their children.

The study suggests that parents will shift their parenting styles and their engagement with the school, especially with the teacher, when given information and an opportunity to explore how their attitudes and practices affect their children.

The study suggested a refinement of Chrispeels' model. The revised model indicates five variables that motivate parents to become involved with their children's education, shown as interlocking circles:

1. Actual and perceived school invitations and opportunities to be involved.
2. Parent's sense of place in their child's education.
3. Parent's knowledge and skills about how to be involved.
4. Parent's concept of parenting.
5. Parent's aspirations and love for their child.

Conclusions

The authors state that the data from this study "indicate that the concepts about the parents' role, based on cultural traditions brought from Mexico and prior experiences, can limit the range of types and level of involvement and can affect how parents interpret a school's invitations and opportunities to participate. This study, however, demonstrates that these concepts are not fixed, but can be altered by information provided by a cultural-broker initiative, such as PIQE, and that parents will respond when given new ways to construct their roles" (p. 47).

6

Clark, Reginald M. (1993)

Homework-Focused Parenting Practices That Positively Affect Student Achievement
In Chavkin, Nancy Feyl (Ed.), *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society*
Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 85–105

Summary: This article reports on a study of 460 low- and high-achieving third graders in Los Angeles. It finds that high achievers tend to come from families in which parents set high standards for their children's educational activities and maintain a home environment that supports learning.

In recent years, Clark and other researchers have shifted their focus from such family background factors as income and educational level to such family attitudes and behaviors as high expectations for their children. Although poverty and low education seem to predict low achievement, these studies are finding that families of all backgrounds can promote high achievement among students. This study was designed to explore

- whether certain parenting practices related to homework and studying can promote high achievement, and
- whether those practices are associated with parents' education, family structure, and ethnic background.

Clark drew a sample of 1,141 third-grade students from 71 Los Angeles elementary schools with computerized student records. The sample was divided into two groups, high achievers (scoring at or above the 50th percentile on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills for two years) and low achievers (scoring at or below the 25th percentile for two years). The students were predominantly Hispanic, black, Asian, or other non-Anglos.

Clark sent a questionnaire to the parents of sample students, to learn about parents' perceptions of and practices concerning homework, how their children handle homework assignments, and family background. The response rate was 40 percent; 304 questionnaires were returned from parents of low achievers, 156 from parents of high achievers. Asian and black families were overrepresented, while white and Hispanic families were underrepresented. Clark introduced controls for family income, education level, and family structure.

Findings

Most parents talk to their children about homework, read to their children, and make sure they do their assignments. On many of the variables Clark measured, there was no significant difference between parents of high achievers and low achievers. However, the parents of high achievers were more involved in home learning activities and reported that their children spent more time on homework and were more likely to have a dictionary. On the other hand, parents of low achievers assisted their children with homework more and spoke English at home more often.

In terms of family background, low achievers tended to come from homes where the parents were younger, were not employed outside the home, had not been to college, were low-income and receiving public assistance, and had more than two children. Even though the higher-achieving students often had parents who were not home to monitor their children's activities between three and five in the afternoon, their parents' participation in the workforce was related to higher test scores.

Two clusters of variables—parent's press for the child's academic success and family circumstances and resources for achievement—were significantly related to higher achievement.

Two clusters of variables—parent's press for the child's academic success and family circumstances and resources for achievement—were significantly related to higher achievement. Table 10 shows the percentage of the difference between high and low achievers that can be explained by these variables.

Table 10. Percentage of Difference between High and Low Achievers That Can Be Explained by Two Clusters of Variables

Factor	Cluster of Variables	Variance (%)
Parent's press for child's academic success	– Parent perception of frequency of homework assignments – Parent perception of child's homework engagement – Child knowledge of how to use dictionary – Parent expectation for child's education	47.2
Family circumstances and resources for achievement	– Parent knowledge of how to help – Mother's unemployment status – Number of children living at home	41.7

Despite the relationship between achievement and family resources, Clark found that high achievers came from a wide variety of family background. "Let us recall that 51.3 percent of the mothers of high achievers possessed no more than a high school education. Almost 40 percent . . . lived in single parent households. Almost 43 percent of the high achievers were Hispanic and 21.8 percent were Black" (p. 103).

Conclusions

> Results of these analyses revealed that home process variables, parental personality variables, and family background circumstances worked together to shape student achievement patterns. The data showed that most parents of both high- and low-achieving students were enacting some of the positive behaviors that contribute to student achievement. . . . However, to be academically successful, students apparently needed their parents (or other adults) to expose them to an array of additional support behaviors. (p. 103)

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Clark, Reginald M. (2002)

Ten hypotheses about What Predicts Student Achievement for African-American students and All Other Students: What the Research Shows
In Allen, Walter R., et al., (Eds.), *African American Education: Race, Community, Inequality and Achievement—A Tribute to Edgar G. Epps*
Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science, in press, 2002

Summary: This article reports on a study of low- and high-achieving students in nine data samples representing 1,058 youths and young adults. It finds that student achievement is highly related to how students, parents, and teachers use their time, and to the involvement of adult mentors in student activities.

In this chapter, Clark expands on his earlier research about the impact of family background, attitudes, and behaviors on student achievement (see Clark, 1993). What are the reasons for student achievement? Is it primarily the result of family background (ethnicity, income, and education level), school resources (facilities, per pupil expenditure), or factors within the control of students, families, teachers, coaches/mentors, tutors, and others in the community?

Students and the adults who supervise them make critical decisions about how to use their time and energy. These decisions can affect students' opportunity to learn the skills needed to perform well on standardized tests in reading and math. Clark considers two questions specifically related to family and community involvement.

- Does student engagement in out-of-school activities guided by adults have a positive effect on academic achievement?
- Does involvement in such "high-yield activities" such as reading, writing, and study guided by adults have a positive effect on student achievement?

Clark and his colleagues analyzed nine data samples on young people collected between 1984 and 1999. They were students in grades 1–12, college seniors, and young adults, located in Nashville, Tennessee; Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, California; and Kellogg's youth and teen after-school enrichment programs in 13 states. The samples were divided into two groups: high achievers (scoring at or above the 50th percentile on standardized tests for two years) and low achievers (scoring at or below the 25th percentile for two years). Clark analyzed these data samples using rigorous analytical procedures such as multiple regression correlations.

Findings

High-achieving students spend significantly more time (hours each week) than low achievers:

- attending school and doing structured learning activities.
- engaged in academic lessons in the classroom and in literacy-promoting activities out of school.

- taking part in such "high-yield activities" as reading, writing, and studying, and in such "enrichment activities" as hobbies, playing games, and talking.
- sleeping and taking care of their health.

These weekly differences in how high- and low-achieving students spend their time in and out of school accumulate. In elementary school, this can amount to a total of 80 more hours of learning in a year. By fifth grade, low achievers can be 9–12 months behind their higher-achieving classmates. The difference in how time is spent also grows wider as students get older. For example, the gap between high- and low-achieving students' time in weekly learning activities is about two hours in elementary school, and seven hours in high school. Low-achieving students spend more time than higher-achieving students

High-achieving high school students spent more than nine hours a week in adult-guided activities, while low-achieving students spent more than three hours.

- engaged in unstructured leisure activities, such as "hanging out," talking on the phone, playing games, watching TV, and relaxing.
- doing chores, traveling to and from school (and other places), and working for pay.

The expectations of parents and other adults are positively related to student performance in school. Although all groups of parents Clark studied placed a high value on education and had high hopes for their students, the amount of time children spent with adults varied. High-achieving high school students spent more than nine hours a week in adult-guided activities, while low-achieving students spent more than three hours.

Conclusions

> Clearly, African American students' (test) scores are below the 25th percentile because of factors that have little or nothing to do with their ethnicity . . . Rather, the racial achievement gap is due to the time-use habits of students, parents and teachers (in and out of school) and adult mentor involvement in student activities. (p. 22)

"The results indicate that the combined effect of the quality of students' out of school learning activities, the amount of time exposed to powerful learning activities, and parents' and teachers' standards for their children accounted for most of the variance in student achievement." These factors had a far greater effect "than (mother's) educational level, parents' age, and economics circumstances combined" (p. 20). Academic success (school test scores) is more likely to happen when

- students spend at least 15 hours per week with teachers doing high-quality learning activities.
- students spend 8–15 hours a week in out-of-school learning activities.
- out-of-school activities are guided by adults with high standards for achievement.
- students are focused and engaged when taking part in out-of-school learning activities.
- students know how to study, plan, and complete projects, and have access to libraries and reference materials.

Schools and youth-serving agencies (for example, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA) should offer programs that encourage reading, writing, and studying during the school day as well as during evenings, weekends, and summer. "Given the importance of high-impact learning programs, it seems prudent to empower the adults who guide and instruct students (their teachers, parents, and mentors) with knowledge and skills for helping the students to organize and manage their time effectively . . . Programs need to emphasize personal development of the adults as well as the youths" (p. 23).

8

Downey, Douglas B. (2002)

Parental and Family Involvement in Education
In Molnar, Alex (Ed.), et al., *School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence*
Tempe, AZ: Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU), College of Education, Arizona State University

Summary: This chapter in a report reviews literature on parent involvement in school and notes several factors related to school success. From an exploration of norms and social networks to parent-child interactions at home, Downey concludes by discussing the weaknesses in current research.

How parents interact with children at home has a greater effect on school performance than how parents interact with school.

Three chapters in this EPRU report describe factors based out of school that contribute to student achievement. Section 3, by Downey, summarizes research related to parent involvement. He discusses evidence that school performance is enhanced by parent-teacher relationships and brings findings from sociology and workplace studies to make these points:

1. Creating a standard of high parent involvement increases pressure on parents to participate. When many parents are involved and know each other, children more closely identify with school. Further, the network of parents that develops creates cohesion. He gives an example of a norm for homework: "If most parents strictly enforce homework rules, then it becomes more difficult for any single child to resist." Downey mentions that these examples are not proven in research for all subject areas.
2. How parents interact with children at home has a greater effect on school performance than how parents interact with school. He presents research on three parenting styles and their relationships to school success: authoritative parenting, permissive parenting, and authoritarian parenting. These styles vary by whether they have these effective qualities: high expectations for students, responsiveness, and warmth.
    - Research finds that the authoritative style, with its high expectations and high responsiveness, has the greatest effect on student success.
    - These parenting styles overlap substantially with family income and education. Higher-income families are more likely to have an authoritative parenting style.
3. How effectively parents are able to help with homework may be related to their level of education, according to some researchers. We do not have definitive evidence on the effect of parents' homework help on school success. Family income and education also seem to affect how and to what degree parents interact with teachers and school officials. In these and other examples, Downey presents reasons researchers need to control for family income and education levels in studying parent involvement.

Conclusions

Downey recommends that programs developed to promote parent-teacher communication focus on improving relationships between parents and their children. He also recommends programs that meet the broad needs of parents, such as improving reading skills, ways to decrease financial stress, and health and nutrition.

In addition, Downey explains problems in the literature on parent involvement: "An important concern is that the observed associations between parenting practices and student performance represent mere correlations, not causal relationships" (Chapter 10, p. 6). And because we do not really understand what specific family characteristics and activities cause poor school performance, we are not close to understanding why poor performance occurs.

9

Dryfoos, Joy G. (2000) ED450204

Evaluations of Community Schools: Findings to Date
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY: Coalition for Community Schools
http://www.communityschools.org/evaluation/evalprint.html

Summary: This paper briefly reviews 49 evaluations of community-school initiatives, some large in scale with many local sites. It found that 36 programs reported academic gains for students they serve. The programs also reported improvements in student behavior and development, family well-being, and community life.

The purpose of this review was to document the impact of community schools on student achievement, family well-being, and community life. As defined by the Coalition for Community Schools, a community school is a program operating in a public school building with these qualities:

- Open to students, families, and the community before, during, and after school, seven days a week throughout the year.
- Operated through a partnership between the school system and one or more community agencies.
- Designed by families, youth, principals, teachers, and neighborhood residents.
- Promoting both educational achievement and positive youth development.

A typical program has before- and after-school learning programs and includes a family-support center. Staff can make referrals to such social services as medical care and housing assistance. The program attracts volunteers and local partners from the community.

For this review, Dryfoos obtained evaluation and other data on results from 49 different school-community programs. Some are huge district or statewide programs, such as the California Healthy Start initiative and LA's Best, an after-school program. The national Communities in Schools organization database includes information from state and local programs. Some studies, however, evaluate only one school. All the reports present findings on at least one outcome, and 46 of the 49 report positive changes. Very few of the studies reviewed here use sophisticated research design, such as random assignment to comparison groups. Instead, most studies relied on before- and after-tests of students served.

Findings

Outcomes from the programs were organized into four categories:

- Learning and achievement: 36 of the 49 programs, mostly elementary schools, reported academic gains, generally improvements in reading and math test scores over two to three years. In at least eight cases, the outcomes were limited to students who received special services such as case management, mental health, or extended-day sessions. Nineteen programs, including Communities in Schools,

reported improvements in school attendance. Eleven programs reported a decline in suspensions.

- Improved social behavior and healthy youth development: Eleven programs, including California's Healthy Start, reported reductions in substance abuse. Others also reported drops in teen pregnancy and disruptive behavior.
- Family well-being: Programs with a strong family focus, including Healthy Start, reported that families improved filling basic needs such as housing, food, finances, and jobs. At least 12 programs reported increases in parent involvement, as measured by volunteer hours.
- Enhanced community life: Programs reported that families and students had better access to such services as health care. Six programs reported lower violence and less street crime. One found a decline in student mobility.

"It is time for community schools to be recognized as an important component of the education reform movement."

For example, Stevenson-YMCA Community School Program in Long Beach, California, integrated academic standards into its extended-day activities. In one year, first- through third-grade students' grades and test scores improved, so that students who scored below average on tests declined from 49 percent to 30 percent, and students with above-average grades went from 19 percent to 34 percent. There was no control group.

Conclusions

Dryfoos compares these findings to data on the school reform movement, reported in *An Educators' Guide to School Reform*, published by the America Institutes for Research. This review of research on 24 whole school approaches similar to the community schools concept finds that: "In general, evidence of positive effects on student achievement—arguably the most important feature of any reform approach—is extremely limited. Even though many of the approaches have been in schools for years, only three provide strong evidence of positive effects on student achievement. As a result educators often are considering school reform without vital information on which to make decisions. More rigorous evaluations are needed with broad dissemination of findings" (p. 6).

Although the research on community schools also has limitations, there is growing evidence that community schools have positive effects on students, families, and communities. Dryfoos concludes, "It is time for community schools to be recognized as an important component of the education reform movement. Most of these programs have goals not only to improve school performance, but also to change the lives of children and their families, and to reduce social barriers to learning. These initiatives recognize that forces for upgrading the quality of education must be joined with the provision of strong supports" (p. 6).

10

Epstein, Joyce L., Clark, Laurel, Salinas, Karen Clark, and Sanders, Mavis (1997)

Scaling up School-Family-Community Connections in Baltimore: Effects on Student Achievement and Attendance
Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR and the Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships, Johns Hopkins University

Summary: This is a short report on a family-school partnership initiative in 80 Baltimore elementary schools. In schools with stronger partnership programs, the authors found small but significant gains in attendance and in third-grade students' scores in writing and math. The authors point out that readily available test score and attendance data can provide important information about the impact of a family-school partnership program.

"Schools with stronger programs of partnership have better student attendance, regardless of the area of the city or years in the program."

This paper reports on the feasibility of linking annual data on attendance and achievement with evaluations of a school's partnership program. If gains in attendance and achievement are found more often in schools with a highly rated partnership program, the program's impact on student outcomes can be more easily verified and monitored.

In Baltimore, 80 public schools are members of the National Network of Partnership-2000 Schools, a program affiliated with CRESPAR (Center for Research on Students Placed at Risk) at Johns Hopkins University. To measure student outcomes at each of these Partnership schools, researchers obtained data from the state on student attendance and Maryland State Performance Assessment scores in writing, reading, and math.

These outcomes were correlated with the effectiveness of the schools' parent and community involvement programs. The programs were rated by facilitators who assist the schools. At the end of each year, the facilitators rated the schools' quality of partnership, from 1 = poor to 4 = excellent, in each of six types of involvement (see Catsambis, 1998, for a complete list). Each school's rating is an average of these six scores.

Findings

As expected, the best predictors of school attendance were prior school attendance and student mobility. In other words, schools with a past record of low attendance and high mobility were the most likely still to have low attendance. Once these were accounted for, however, the quality of the schools' partnership program was significa-ntly related to improved attendance. "Schools with stronger programs of partnership have better student attendance, regardless of the area of the city or years in the program" (p. 1).

The quality of the school's partnership program also contributed to a small but significant increase in the percentage of third graders who score at a satisfactory level or

better on the state achievement test. The effects are stronger for writing and reading than for math. The researchers suggest that if measures were made of effective practices of partnership that focus on writing, reading, or math, the effects would be much stronger.

Conclusions

The researchers found "a potentially important pattern that suggests that a more comprehensive and well-implemented program of partnerships may help boost student skills in all subjects" (p. 2). They caution, however, that in districts like Baltimore, "fewer than 20 percent of students reach satisfactory scores on the state's new assessments in writing, reading, or math. School, family, and community partnerships can boost attendance and increase achievement slightly, but excellent classroom teaching will be needed to dramatically improve students' writing, reading, and math skills to meet the state standards . . ." (p. 4).

This study also confirms that the effects of partnership programs can be easily assessed using readily available annual school data such as attendance and student achievement test scores.

11 Epstein, Joyce L., and Sanders, Mavis G. (2000)

Connecting Home, School, and Community: New Directions for Social Research
In Hallinan, Maureen T. (Ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Education*
New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 285–306

Summary: This review of research finds that it is now generally agreed that school, family, and community partnerships are necessary to improve children's chances for success in school. It concludes, however, that better data and more exacting analysis are needed to clarify the results of different practices of partnership.

Social capital may be invested in ways that help students learn, strengthen families, improve schools, and enrich communities.

To understand the positive effects of family-school collaboration, Epstein developed a new perspective to show that families, schools, and communities have a common mission around children's learning and development (Epstein, 1987). This view recognized that home, school, and community act as overlapping spheres of influence on children. Social capital (the benefits of interactions among people) increases when well-designed partnerships enable families, students, and others in the community to interact in productive ways. Social capital may be invested in ways that help students learn, strengthen families, improve schools, and enrich communities. Children grow up in multiple contexts that are connected by a web of networks.

Findings

This review confirms four general findings:

- Teachers, parents, and students have little understanding of each other's interests in children and schools. Most teachers do not know the goals that parents have for their children, how parents help them learn, or how parents would like to be involved. Most parents do not know much about the educational programs in their children's school or what teachers require of them.
- School and classroom practices influence family involvement. In general, better-educated families are more involved in schools. But families with less education and lower incomes do become just as involved if schools have effective programs to engage them.
- When teachers involve parents, they rate parents more positively and stereotype families less than other teachers do. Principals and parents, in turn, give higher ratings to teachers who involve families.
- Specific outcomes are linked to different types of involvement. For example, practices that encourage parents to read to children at home affect a student's reading achievement.

Conclusions

As research continues, "researchers must continue to ask deeper questions, employ better samples, collect useful data, create more fully specified measurement models, and conduct more elegant analyses to more clearly identify the results of particular practices of partnership. An added challenge is to continue to conduct research that helps

improve educational policies and school practices of partnership. Studies are needed at all grade levels, in differently organized schools, in varied locations, and with students and families with diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds" (p. 290).

Epstein and her colleagues recommend four new topics for research on partnerships: transitions, community connections, students' roles in partnerships, and the results of school, family, and community connections.

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Epstein, Joyce L., Simon, Beth S., and Salinas, Karen Clark (1997)

Involving Parents in Homework in the Middle Grades
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University
Phi Delta Kappan Research Bulletin, No. 18, 4 pages
http://www.pdkintl.org/edres/resbul18.htm

Summary: This is a study of Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), an interactive homework process developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and teachers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. It found that 683 Baltimore middle-grade students' test scores and grades in writing and language arts tended to improve when their families participated in TIPS learning activities at home.

Many parents want to know how they can help their child do better in school. At the same time, many teachers with large classes feel overwhelmed by the prospect of letting parents know what students are learning and how to help. The TIPS process enables teachers to design homework that requires children to talk to someone at home about their assignment. Parents monitor, interact, and support their children, but they are not asked to teach the subject or direct the assignments.

This study explores whether TIPS interactive homework contributes to middle-grades students' writing scores and report-card grades. It looks at progress over one school year, beyond what the students' initial skills would predict. It also considers how students and families reacted to the TIPS process.

Researchers analyzed three TIPS writing samples for 683 students over the school year. Then they surveyed 413 students and 218 parents about their experiences with TIPS at the end of the year. They controlled for variation in school attendance, family background and income, prior report-card grades, and prior writing skills. They used multiple regression analyses to see if there were any independent effects of TIPS and family involvement. The students were sixth and eighth graders in two mostly African-American middle schools in Baltimore, Maryland. Both schools were among the lowest achieving in the city. There had been little family involvement in students' academic learning at home. On average the students in these schools had very low writing skills.

Findings

The study found that with TIPS interactive homework, most families were informed about and involved in learning activities at home on a regular basis. Students' writing scores and language-arts report-card grades improved.

- Parent participation on TIPS added significantly to students' writing scores as the year progressed.
- Doing more TIPS homework positively affected language-arts report-card grades at the end of the school year.

- Students with lower grades were more positive about TIPS than were more successful students. This indicates that TIPS may help engage some of these students in homework even if they do not like school very much.
- Parents who monitored their children's grades and participated more often liked the TIPS process more than did other parents.

Even after accounting for prior writing scores and grades, the TIPS process boosted student writing skills and success. TIPS also improved parent participation levels, students' homework completion, and teacher attitudes.

Conclusions

Even after accounting for prior writing scores and grades, the TIPS process boosted student writing skills and success. TIPS also improved parent participation levels, students' homework completion, and teacher attitudes.

The authors also concluded, however, that students, families, and schools need more than homework to help students meet their goals for learning and success. Students and their families need to be committed to school attendance, participation in class work, and completion of homework. The authors recommend that "classroom teaching must improve dramatically to meet high standards" (p. 6).

13

Fan, Xitao, and Chen, Michael (1999) ED430048

Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis
Arlington, VA: National Science Foundation; Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics

Summary: This is a meta-analysis of 25 research studies conducted over the past 10 years. It suggests that parent involvement, especially parents' aspirations for their children, has a significant impact on student achievement. Some types of involvement, especially expressing expectations for achievement, have more effect than others.

Although the idea that parent involvement can improve student achievement is appealing, the research findings are not clear or consistent. In this study, Fan and Chen identified different facets of parent involvement and examined whether some have more impact than others on students' academic achievement. First, they identified about 2,000 relevant articles, papers, and reports. From this base, they identified studies that are based on data about both parent involvement and student achievement and that included regression or path analysis to determine their relationship. Only 25 studies met their criteria.

The studies varied in how they defined both involvement and achievement. The researchers grouped these definitions into broad categories. Across the studies, parent involvement was defined in these ways:

- Educational aspirations for children, such as expectations for their performance.
- Communication about school-related matters, such as homework and school programs.
- Parents' supervising children's activities, such as homework, TV watching, and after-school time.
- Parents' participation in school activities, such as volunteering and attending events.
- General parent involvement.

Student achievement was defined in these ways:

- Grade point average (GPA).
- Test scores in specific subjects (math, science, reading, social studies).
- Other (promotion, retention, teacher ratings).

The researchers used complex statistical techniques to group the studies' findings and draw conclusions across the whole body of research.

Findings

Overall, the researchers found a "medium effect size" (r = .25) of parent involvement on student achievement that was "noticeable and apparent." It was greater for such general achievement measures as GPA (r = .33) than for grades or test scores in specific subjects (science, math). Fan and Chen feel that GPA is probably a better indicator of overall achievement.

"The overall relationship between parent involvement and students' academic achievement is close to r = .30. Although an average correlation of .30 may appear low to many people . . . this represents a medium effect size in social sciences . . . certainly a meaningful effect."

Fan and Chen also found that some forms of parent involvement have a more noticeable effect on achievement. Parents' supervision of children at home has the weakest effect (r = .09). Parents' aspirations and expectations, on the other hand, have the strongest relationship with achievement (r = .40). They do not suggest that supervision is unimportant but rather that parents may impose more controls when students are not doing well in school.

Conclusions

"The overall relationship between parent involvement and students' academic achievement is close to r = .30. Although an average correlation of .30 may appear low to many people . . . this represents a medium effect size in social sciences . . . certainly a meaningful effect." In practical terms, this means that students from families with above-median parent involvement showed success rates that were 30 percent higher than those from families with below-median parent involvement. "This is not trivial by any standard," they conclude (p. 18).

Fan and Chen recommend that future studies define and measure parent involvement carefully, and measure the impact of different types separately. They also recommend that measures of student achievement be both global (GPA) and specific by subject (math scores) in the same study.

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Gold, Eva, Simon, Elaine, and Brown, Chris (2002)

Successful Community Organizing for School Reform
Chicago, IL: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform
http://www.crosscity.org

Summary: This study was conducted by Research for Action, an education research organization in Philadelphia, in partnership with the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform. It is based on interviews with 19 community organizing groups working to improve education and in-depth case studies of five of these groups. The authors identified a set of eight indicators to assess the groups' impact. The indicators are based on goals toward which the groups are currently working, and on which they have had some success. The eight indicators are leadership development, community power, social capital, public accountability, equity, school-community connection, high-quality curriculum and instruction, and positive school climate.

Public schools in low-income urban areas face serious problems: overcrowding, crumbling facilities, low funding, high staff turnover, outdated materials, and low student achievement. Students attending these schools are shortchanged. They are shut out of high-quality programs, discouraged from going to college, and unprepared for work. Community organizing groups have begun to address these issues. This study looks beyond schools and school systems to examine work that creates a positive dynamic between communities and schools.

From a national sample, the researchers selected 19 community organizing groups for telephone interviews. These groups were a broad cross-section including urban and rural, neighborhood and district level, and affiliated or unaffiliated with national networks. The research team interviewed executive directors, lead organizers, or longtime leaders of the groups. Out of that sample, the researchers selected five groups for further study and spent two years documenting their work in detail: Alliance Organizing Project in Philadelphia; Austin Interfaith in Texas; Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago; ACORN in New York City; and Oakland Community Organizations in California. The researchers visited each site twice for data collection and a third time to present findings and receive feedback.

Volume 1 presents an indicators framework of strategies and accomplishments of education organizing and a theory of change that leads from increased community capacity to improved student learning. Volume 2 offers detailed case studies of the five groups.

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Findings

Examples of the reported impact of community organizing, by eight indicators, are given in Table 11.

Table 11. Examples of the Reported Impact of Community Organizing, by Indicator

Indicator	Measures of Impact
Leadership development	– Parents and/or community members hold leadership positions – Parents, youth, and school staff lead meetings, design agendas, speak in public – Public officials are aware of issues that concern parents, youth, and school staff and are responsive to them
Community power	– Political and district leaders acknowledge issues important to community groups – Groups of parents and community representatives monitor new programs and policies
Social capital	– Increase in parents' sense of efficacy – Greater number of parent/community candidates for school councils – Increased participation in local organizations
Public accountability	– District data on schools and student performance become public – Parent and community representation on review board, panels, and oversight committees – Increased sense of ownership of local schools
Equity	– Increased funding for underfunded schools – Increase in GED graduates – Equity in distribution of credentialed teachers – Equity in availability of advanced courses – Reduction and equity in class size, suspensions, and expulsions
School-community connections	– Increase in variety and number of community-oriented programs based at school – Increase in participation in programs
Positive school climate	– Pride in school – Signage in other languages – Student perception that teachers care
High-quality instruction and curriculum	– Improved test scores – Increased acceptance of students into magnet programs – Availability of challenging courses – Increase in teachers' sense of efficacy – Increase in student perception that school is "relevant" and respectful of their culture

The unique role of community organizing in education reform is to build community capacity and link that to school improvement through public accountability. The indicators of leadership development, community power, and social capital, as well as public accountability, are "almost totally absent in the work of school reform as it is usually defined." Community organizing groups add a locally rooted dimension that otherwise would be missing by

- sustaining the vision and momentum for change over time,
- persisting despite obstacles and setbacks,
- building political capital and creating political will that motivates officials to act, and
- producing authentic change in policy and programs that reflects community concerns

The unique role of community organizing in education reform is to build community capacity and link that to school improvement through public accountability.

Conclusions

> In this study, we have shown that when ordinary people can enter into the education arena, their efforts can result in meaningful gains for students who have not been well served by the public schools. Ordinary people can indeed begin to transform the institution of public education to become more equitable and responsive. (Executive Summary, p. 7)

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Gutman, Leslie Morrison, and Midgley, Carol (2000)

The Role of Protective Factors in Supporting the Academic Achievement of Poor African American Students during the Middle School Transition
Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 29(2), Plenum Publishing Corporation, 223–248

Summary: This is a study of African-American students from 62 families during the transition between grades 5 and 6. It found that the single most important factor in their achievement was a sense of academic "self-efficacy"—or confidence ence that they could do well in school. However, a combination of parent involvement at home and supports at school also had a significant positive effect on student grades.

For young people of color and from low-income families, the transition to middle school can be especially difficult. They are moving to a larger, more-complex school at a time when stable, supportive bonds with adults are especially important. As a result, they often feel unconnected to school and their teachers. It is not surprising that for these students, academic problems begin to mount during the middle grades.

This study looks at whether certain factors can protect students from negative outcomes. These factors are

1. academic "self-efficacy" (feeling confident that they can master the work in school);
2. parent involvement (talking to students about school, checking homework, attending events, and volunteering at school);
3. feeling supported by teachers (taking time to work with students, not criticizing them); and
4. feeling they "belong" at the school (feeling accepted, respected, and included at school).

Gutman and Midgley further examine the interaction of these factors. Will students who feel more academically confident and accepted at school, and who feel more support from their parents and teachers, earn higher GPAs than their classmates? What combination of factors is most or least powerful?

Students in this study are drawn from 62 low-income African-American families living in a high-poverty school district in southeastern Michigan. Their responses were drawn from surveys used in a large, long-term study conducted across the state. Families were visited by a trained interviewer.

At the end of the fifth and sixth grades, the researchers collected the students' GPAs. First, they examined the effects of each factor on GPA, then looked at the effect of combinations of factors on GPA.

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Findings

As expected, all students on the average had higher GPAs in the fifth grade than in the sixth. In other words, their grades went down in middle school. Controlling for prior grades (how well the student had done academically), the researchers then looked at the contribution of each factor to student achievement. They found that students with higher academic self-efficacy (confidence) had higher GPAs than their classmates. Parent involvement, teacher support, and feelings of belonging did not appear to affect GPA.

Controlling for prior grades, student efficacy and other factors, students with both high parent involvement and a high sense of belonging at school had higher GPAs than students with low parent involvement and a low sense of belonging.

When the researchers combined the factors, however, another picture emerged. Controlling for prior grades, student efficacy and other factors, students with both high parent involvement and a high sense of belonging at school had higher GPAs than students with low parent involvement and a low sense of belonging. A similar pattern appeared when parent involvement levels and teacher support were combined. Controlling for prior grades, students with both high parent involvement and high teacher support had higher GPAs than students with low parent involvement and low teacher support. The impact of academic efficacy on GPA did not vary with levels of parent involvement, a sense of belonging, or teacher support.

Table 12. Combined Effect of Teacher Support and High Parent Involvement on Grade Point Averages

Grade Point Averages (on a 0–4 scale)		
Teacher Support	High Parent Involvement	Low Parent Involvement
High	2.5	0.5
Low	0.6	0.7

Table 13. Combined Effect of Student Sense of Belonging and High Parent Involvement on Grade Point Averages

Grade Point Averages (on a 0–4 scale)		
Student Sense of Belonging	High Parent Involvement	Low Parent Involvement
High	3.4	1.0
Low	1.8	0.8

Another way to look at this is that parent involvement alone will not make a significant contribution to student achievement if their children don't feel connected to school. Students must also feel that their teachers support them and that they belong at school.

Conclusions

Gutman and Midgley conclude that their finding about the combined effect of family and school factors is significant. "In our study, students with high levels of both family (parent involvement) and school (teacher support and feelings of belonging) factors experienced higher GPA across the transition than did their classmates who had high levels of either one or none of the factors." This suggests that "the combination of school and family factors may be most effective in supporting the academic achievement of poor African American students during the transition to middle level schools" (p. 243).

The effectiveness of parent involvement in low-income communities may depend on support from teachers and schools. School staff can either encourage or deter parent involvement by their own beliefs and attitudes. When teachers recognize parents' contributions and see them as valuable resources, they encourage parents' sense of efficacy and help them feel like a valued partner. Schools can also offer parents more meaningful roles for involvement, increasing parents' connection to the school. On the other hand, if parents feel they have little to contribute, they transmit these feeling to their children.

> As our data suggest, middle-level schools that create a positive environment and encourage parent-teacher involvement may not only help engage parents of adolescents, but they also may help to make parent involvement more effective in supporting the academic achievement of poor African American students across the middle school transition. (p. 244)

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Ho Sui-Chu, Esther, and Willms, J. Douglas (1996) EJ533315

Effects of Parental Involvement on Eighth-Grade Achievement
Sociology of Education, 69(2), 126–141

Summary: This study is an analysis of middle school achievement, using a large, long-term national database (NELS:88). It found that involvement at home—discussing school with children and helping children plan their education programs—had a strong positive relationship to student achievement. The study did NOT find that higher-income parents and two-parent families were more involved with their children's education. The types of involvement vary somewhat, however, by the families' race and ethnicity.

Over the years, many studies have suggested that higher-income parents are more involved in their children's education than lower-income parents. This greater involvement fosters more positive attitudes toward school, improves homework habits, reduces absenteeism and dropping out, and enhances academic achievement. If this is so, then strategies to increase involvement of all parents may be a way to reduce gaps in achievement between students from low- and high-income families.

The purpose of this study was to

- clarify types of parent involvement and how they may vary within and among different schools.
- explore the relationship among parent involvement, family background, and student achievement.

The researchers identified four types of parent involvement, two based at home, and two based at school:

- Discussing school activities at home.
- Monitoring out-of-school activities.
- Having contacts with school staff.
- Volunteering and attending parent-teacher conferences and other school events.

Using data from NELS:88 (24,599 eighth-grade students and their parents and teachers), Ho Sui-Chu and Willms asked if each type of involvement varies among students in a school, depending on family background, and between different schools, depending on varying school practices. Next, they examined whether involvement varied depending on whether the school served higher- or lower-income families. They also looked at family ethnicity and structure, as well as student learning or behavior problems, to see if these factors affect involvement.

Finally, they looked at whether the four types of involvement are related to variations in student achievement, based on standardized test scores in reading and math. Using a

complex statistical model, they estimated each school's impact on achievement, beyond the effect of family background. Then they estimated if the effect is related to parents' efforts or to the average level of involvement at the school.

Although higher-income families were slightly more involved in some ways, the differences were small. On the whole, the study did NOT find that higher-income parents and two-parent families were more involved with their children's education.

Findings

- **Among schools:** For involvement at home and parent-initiated contacts with school, there was little variation among the 1,000 schools in the NELS:88 sample. For volunteering and other activities at school, however, higher-SES schools tend to have more parent involvement. (A limitation of NELS:88 data is that it does not include much information about school practices and policies to engage families, making comparison difficult.)
- **At home:** Although higher-income families were slightly more involved in some ways, the differences were small. On the whole, the study did NOT find that higher-income parents and two-parent families were more involved with their children's education.
- **By race/ethnicity:** Asian, Hispanic, and African-American parents participated as much in their children's education as did white parents, but in slightly different ways. African-American parents had slightly higher involvement than whites in all types except school participation, where their involvement was about the same. Hispanics had slightly higher levels of home supervision than whites but were about the same in all other types. Asian parents tended to provide more supervision at home than white parents but spent less time discussing school, communicating with school staff, volunteering, and attending PTO meetings.
- **By gender and student problems:** On the average, parents talked more about school with girls than boys, but they had more contact with school staff about boys than girls. Parents whose children had learning or behavior problems tended to have more contact with school staff. They also were less active at school and talked less with their children.
- **On achievement:** Of the four types of involvement, discussing school with children at home and helping children plan their education programs had the greatest effect on student achievement. The average level of participation in a school had a small but significant effect on reading achievement. Parents' volunteering or attending PTO meetings had only a modest effect on reading and almost no effect on math achievement.

Conclusions

> The prevailing perception among educational researchers is that successful schools establish practices that foster greater communication with parents, encourage parents to assist children at home with their schoolwork and planning, and recruit parents to work as volunteers or participate in school governance. The argument is that these practices, in turn, lead to higher levels of schooling outcomes. This may be the case, but our findings suggest that such schools are uncommon. (p. 6)

There is little variation by school in the amount of time families discuss school with their children, even though such discussions have an important effect on student achievement. This suggests, the authors conclude, "that relatively few schools have strong influences on the learning climate in the home. We expect that big gains in achievement could be made through programs that give parents concrete information about parenting styles, teaching methods, and school curricula" (p. 7).

Families of all backgrounds and income levels can—and do—have a positive impact on their children's learning.

Although higher income does have an impact on achievement, the extent to which parents are involved with their children tends to have a positive effect regardless of income. In other words, families of all backgrounds and income levels can—and do—have a positive impact on their children's learning. An interesting twist, however, is that children tend to score higher in both math and reading if they attend a higher-income school, no matter what their own family income level. This may be, in part, because high-SES schools seem to have an overall culture of greater involvement in children's education.

> We reject the culture of poverty thesis: the results do not support the notion that parents from working-class backgrounds place less emphasis on the importance of schooling or that they view education as the purview solely of the school. (p. 7)

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Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V., and Sandler, Howard M. (1997) EJ548327

Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children's Education?
Review of Educational Research, 67(1), 3–42

Summary: This review of psychological theory and research suggests that parents develop beliefs and understandings about the requirements and the expectations of the parent role as a function of their membership and participation in varied groups (like family, school, and church). Parents who hold positive beliefs about their efficacy to influence their children's education seem more likely to be involved. A school climate that invites involvement can also influence parents' decisions about involvement in their children's education.

The authors found that parents' ideas about child development, child rearing, and appropriate roles in supporting children's education at home influence parents' decisions about how to be involved in their children's education.

Findings

In examining literature that focused on the processes and mechanisms most important to parents' thinking, the authors found that parents' ideas about child development, child rearing, and appropriate roles in supporting children's education at home influence parents' decisions about how to be involved in their children's education. Belief that their involvement can have a positive influence on their child's education can positively influence children's educational outcomes. Belief that their abilities to exercise and maintain some level of control over events that affect their lives can make a positive impact on children's education results. Parents who hold such positive efficacy beliefs seem more likely to assume that the time and effort they allocate to involvement are well spent because of the positive child outcomes they are likely to create.

This review of the literature also found that even well-designed school programs inviting involvement will meet with limited success if they do not address the issues of parent role beliefs and parents' sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school. If schools and communities wish to benefit from parent involvement they must work specifically to enhance parents' standing in both areas.

Conclusions

This article provides procedural knowledge for educators, researchers, and policymakers who want to improve parent involvement. First, the authors assert that school staff make an explicit effort to include parents in the school's mission. Another recommendation is that parents and school staff work together to define the parent's role. The authors propose that the teacher/parent time together be spent mutually agreeing on expectations for the parents' role and devising specific ways for parents to offer academically useful help to children. Further recommendations include encouraging community employers to offer parents time away from work to be involved in school and encouraging teachers to make regular communications to parents about learning goals, activities, and focused suggestions for parental help. Finally, the authors suggest that the parent's perspective be included in the process.

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Invernizzi, Marcia, Rosemary, Catherine, Richards, Connie Juel, and Richards, Herbert C. (1997)

At-Risk Readers and Community Volunteers: A Three-Year Perspective
In Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., *Scientific Studies of Reading, 1*(3), 277–300

Summary: This is a study of Book Buddies, a low-cost volunteer program in Charlottesville, Virginia, to tutor children in reading. The authors found a positive impact on first and second graders' reading scores. Students who attended more sessions made greater gains than those attending fewer sessions. This suggests that a well-designed community volunteer program can be both effective and affordable.

Children who do not learn to read well in first grade often continue to do poorly in school. Most school-based programs for children at risk involve highly trained professionals at a high cost. This study was designed to determine if a comprehensive literacy tutoring program could be carried out by nonprofessional volunteers and could meet the needs of children in the program. The researchers studied

1. the effectiveness of a tutorial delivered by community volunteers,
2. results on reading achievement over time, and
3. the cost-effectiveness of a large-scale community intervention program.

The curriculum and program are based on the Reading Recovery program of literacy intervention (reading text, word study, writing for sounds, and reading a new book). Three cohorts of students (N = 358) in six elementary schools participated over three years. Each tutorial included a child, a volunteer tutor, and a graduate student reading coordinator. The students were mostly first graders referred by teachers as having scored poorly on a screening test. Seventy percent were low-income.

Volunteers from many walks of life were recruited as tutors. Graduate students in reading education coordinated and implemented the program at each school. The students' reading achievement was assessed using the Early Reading Screening Inventory, the Wide Range Achievement Test, and reading out loud from a text. The study includes student test data from both before and after beginning the program.

For comparison, students were divided into two groups—one group took part in a lower number (less than 40) of tutorial sessions and the other group in a higher number (over 40) of sessions. The two groups differed only in attendance, not by student risk factors (gender, poverty, special services). Invernizzi and her colleagues then compared scores in various reading skills, by group.

Findings

First, the student group that attended a higher number of sessions gained significantly more than the group with fewer sessions, across three of four skill categories.

The student group that attended a higher number of sessions gained significantly more than the group with fewer sessions, across three of four skill categories.

Table 14. Effect of Tutorials by Community Volunteers on Reading Skills

Mean Skill Scores	Pretest		Posttest	
	Low Group	High Group	Low Group	High Group
Alphabet knowledge	57.1	61.9	74.8	77.0
Concept of word	7.2	7.2	11.9	11.9
Phoneme knowledge	18.5	19.1	0	50.5
Word recognition	3.7	1.6	24.6	33.5

Second, by comparing the three cohorts, the researchers also found that the program improved over time, with increasing numbers of students showing higher levels of skills. Changes made were to begin tutoring earlier in the year, improve volunteer training, and fine-tune the lesson plans. Overall the third year was more successful than the second year, and the second year more successful than the first.

Third, the cost per child was approximately $600 (total cost of the program divided by the number of children served). This is about one-sixth of the cost of Reading Recovery. Also, the authors claim that average student gains are higher than in other tutorials using volunteers, and are comparable to several tutorials using professionally trained teachers.

Conclusions

This three-year analysis demonstrated that the community-based program's lesson plans matched the needs of the children, that volunteers can effectively tutor children, that the program got better over time, and that it is cost-effective. Furthermore, the program accepts all children who need help, including those with learning disabilities, non-native speakers of English, and children in special education. Book Buddies is now a self-sustaining volunteer program fully funded by the city of Charlottesville.

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Izzo, Charles V., Weissberg, Roger P., Kasprow, Wesley J., and Fendrich, Michael (1999)

A Longitudinal Assessment of Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Children's Education and School Performance
American Journal of Community Psychology, 27(6), 817–839

Summary: This long-term study of 1,200 urban New England children from kindergarten through third grade looked at the effects of parent involvement on students' performance in school over time. When teachers rated their interactions with parents as good, and said that parents participated at home and school, students tended to perform better. The form of involvement that related most strongly to improved performance was parents' engaging in activities at home with their children.

Over a period of three years, the researchers studied 1,205 urban elementary school children from a small, ethnically diverse New England city. They explored relationships among four measures of parent involvement and five measures of students' school performance. The three years covered kindergarten through third grade.

The researchers randomly selected students from 341 classrooms in 27 schools. Then they looked at school-district data on the students' background: gender, grade level, family income and education, and ethnicity. Most students were low-income and African American. Student achievement data from the district included attendance and test scores in math and reading. Using the 38-item Teacher-Child Rating Scale, teachers also assessed how well the children had adapted to school. The researchers consolidated these ratings into two factors:

- School engagement (learning problems, acting out, work habits).
- Social and emotional adjustment (anxiety, social skills, confidence).

Each year, teachers rated the parents' involvement, using these measures:

- The frequency of parent-teacher contacts each year.
- The quality of interactions with parents (constructive working relationships).
- Parent participation in activities at school (yes/no).
- Parents' educational activities at home (yes/no).

Findings

Parent involvement tended to decline over time. In the first year, it was "moderately high." In the second year, parents had fewer contacts with teachers and took part in fewer school activities. There was no change between years 2 and 3. The quality of parent-teacher interactions also declined between the first and third year. Engaging in educational activities at home, however, did not decline over time.

When teachers rated their interactions with parents as good, and said that parents participated at home and school, students tended to perform better. Teachers reported

slightly more contacts, but poorer interaction and less home participation, for boys' parents than for girls' parents.

Three of the four types of parent involvement were positively related to student performance. Comparing forms of parent involvement, the researchers found that engaging in home activities was the strongest positive predictor for math and reading achievement.

Three of the four types of parent involvement were positively related to student performance. Comparing forms of parent involvement, the researchers found that engaging in home activities was the strongest positive predictor for math and reading achievement. Taking part in activities at school was positively related to students' school engagement, and the quality of parent-teacher interactions was positively related to students' social and emotional adjustment. On the other hand, the number of parent-teacher contacts negatively predicted both school engagement and adjustment. In other words, frequent contacts between parents and teachers may mean that children are not performing well in school.

Conclusions

The authors conclude that although parent involvement did not always predict improvements in school performance, engaging in educational activities at home had the strongest effect on student achievement. Home activities were related to the widest range of gains, and related more strongly to academic achievement, than the other forms of parent involvement.

> Taken together, these results suggest that activities requiring parents to come to the school . . . are more difficult to maintain than other kinds of activities, and that schools need to engage in more proactive outreach . . . to foster parent participation and constructive parent-teacher interactions as children get older. (pp. 833–834)

> This research supports the notion that schools can improve children's performance by increasing parents' ability to support learning at home . . . These findings suggest that it will be worthwhile for schools to put effort into fostering more constructive interactions between parents and teachers, instead of focusing solely on increasing the number of parent contacts. (p. 835)

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Jacobs, Lauren, and Hirota, Janice (in press)

Constituency Building for Public School Reform
New York, NY, and Chicago, IL: Academy for Educational Development and Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

Summary: This study, commissioned by the Ford Foundation, looks at constituency-building work to improve education in 14 sites across the country. Many of these community-based initiatives produced positive changes, some resulting in improved student outcomes. These include passage of a $75 million bond issue, a $5 million rehabilitation of a high school, and scheduling and curriculum changes that resulted in improved student grades and English literacy.

This report provides an overview of constituency building across the country. In addition to the researchers, the study team consisted of one person from each of seven national, state, or regional grantees of the Ford Foundation's Constituency-Building for Public School Reform Initiative. These included the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, Interfaith Education Fund (Texas), National Coalition of Advocates for Students, Parents for Public Schools, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence, the Public Education Network, and the 21st Century Fund. The grantees then selected one person to represent each of 14 local efforts. The sites ranged from rural states like Kentucky to large cities like Houston and Chicago. The researchers convened the practitioners to discuss and reflect on their work, its challenges, and issues. Then they derived principles and lessons.

The researchers found that all participants, although working in diverse settings, aim to achieve three objectives. These are

- building understanding, common frameworks, and a sense of commonality;
- creating political will and establishing accountability; and
- shifting relationships and power dynamics.

Study participants, and the parents and community members they work with, employ many strategies. These strategies are aimed at shifting power relations, including

- building relationships so that those holding power become willing to share it.
- working with local school leaders to build their willingness and skills for shared decision making.
- broadening family and community members' power base, including working in coalitions.
- using the rights of free speech, assembly, due process, and access to the courts.
- changing governance policies so that parents and community members gain a seat at the table and a vote on key issues.

Example: In Chicago, ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), a community organizing group, used health care as an issue to engage families. ACORN members, primarily parents, approached administrators at a Chicago elementary school with a proposal. ACORN members would work with teachers to enroll all eligible children in KidCare, free public health insurance. As a result, 80 percent of the students are enrolled, the highest percentage of any school.

"Families, community-based organizations, businesses, and faith-based organizations are demonstrating that non-educators can be powerful forces for education reform."

Parents at other schools adopted similar strategies. At Harper High School, parents found they could not recruit a science teacher because the school had no science labs. More than 400 parents and residents met with the system leaders to demand improvements. In part because of this pressure, the school district approved a $5 million rehabilitation program that included new science labs.

Conclusions

Families, community-based organizations, businesses, and faith-based organizations are demonstrating that non-educators can be powerful forces for education reform. They are using their rights of free speech and free assembly and their votes to hold the system accountable. They are collaborating with educators to develop standards, to recruit qualified teachers to poorly performing schools, and to develop new policies and programs. (in press)

Educators, too, are demonstrating that they can take on powerful new roles. Teachers are leading school-wide reforms, principals are partnering with community organizations to support parent participation in decision making, and superintendents are collaborating with community members to develop new visions for their school systems. (in press)

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Jordan, Gail E., Snow, Catherine E., and Porche, Michelle V. (2000) EJ616175

Project EASE: The Effect of a Family Literacy Project on Kindergarten Students' Early Literacy Skills
Reading Research Quarterly, 35(4), 524–546

Summary: This is a study of a yearlong literacy project, Early Access to Success in Education (EASE), which offers home and school activities for kindergartners and their families in Minnesota. The study was conducted in four schools in one mostly middle-income school district. It found significantly greater gains in reading for children in the program than for children in a comparison group.

Developed in Minnesota, Project EASE is designed to help parents develop their young children's literacy skills. It offers parent education sessions, parent-child activities at school, and book-centered activities at home. This study evaluates the effectiveness of the parent training and assesses the effects of the project on children's language and literacy abilities over a one-year period.

In White Bear Lake school district, 248 kindergarten students and their families from four schools took part in the study. These were divided into two groups: 177 in eight classes participated in project EASE, and 71 in three classes formed a control group. The district is a middle-income, mostly European-American suburb. The schools in the study, however, have the highest percentages of low-income families in the district (about 20 percent).

Project EASE is based on research that shows the powerful contributions of families to children's literacy development. Parent training is organized into five one-month units, each with a different theme. In each unit, a trained parent educator leads a coaching session. For the next three weeks, teachers send home a set of structured activities for parents do with their children. These are designed to engage their children in discussions around a book. Training is held at school during the day, so that parents can visit their children's classroom, or in the evening. Activities are highly focused on specific literacy skills; for example, children label, define, describe, and relate words.

Measures of home literacy support were collected from parents, and a battery of language and literacy tests were administered to EASE and control-group children at the start of the program and at the end of the study. First, the researchers analyzed the children's performance on the pretests and posttests, finding greater gains in the EASE group. Then they examined progress in three skill areas and found that EASE students made the greatest gains in language skills. Next, they controlled for variation in literacy skills at the start of the project and examined the influence of the at-home activities on student gains. Finally, the study used regression analysis to examine impact of attendance and at-home book activities on results for the EASE group.

Findings

- Children whose families engaged in both at-school and at-home activities of Project EASE made significantly greater gains in language scores (vocabulary, story comprehension, and sequencing in storytelling) than comparison-group children.
- The more activities a family completed, the higher their students' gains. The average attendance at school activities was 85 percent, and 80 percent of EASE families completed all home activities.
- The group that gained the most was made up of low-achieving students who started out with low language skills and strong home literacy support.

Children whose families engaged in both at-school and at-home activities of Project EASE made significantly greater gains in language scores (vocabulary, story comprehension, and sequencing in storytelling) than comparison-group children.

Conclusions

The size of the effect is striking because the families involved were fairly literate and their children were attending schools with generally good achievement results. "In other words, even in this moderate- to low-risk sample of English-speaking . . . families with median family incomes above the poverty level and access to good schools . . . there is room for parent involvement to improve children's school performance" (p. 538).

The authors add some cautions. Serious investment in training is needed to ensure a positive impact from programs staffed by volunteers. The enthusiastic reception of Project EASE in this suburban district does not ensure its feasibility or success with higher risk families (severe poverty, low literacy). Although studies are underway in centers of high urban poverty, the results are not yet complete.

22

Kagitcibasi, Cigdem, Sunar, Diane, and Bekman, Sevda (2001)

Long-Term Effects of Early Intervention: Turkish Low-Income Mothers and Children
Applied Developmental Psychology, 22, 333–361

Summary: This study examined the long-term effects on 280 children of four different preschool settings in Istanbul, Turkey. The most effective was a home-based program that provided education and support to mothers. Compared with children randomly placed in other preschool settings, the home-based program had longer-lasting and greater effects on achievement seven years later.

Both educational preschool and mother training programs had a positive effect on cognitive outcomes.

The researchers examined preschool programs in Istanbul, Turkey, to compare the long-term effects on children of four different settings:

- A childcare program with no education offered.
- An educational nursery school.
- Home care where mothers received training and support.
- Home care provided by mothers without support.

For the home-based program that offers support to mothers, Kagitcibasi and her colleagues adapted the HIPPY Program (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters). This program provides information on children's development and training in learning activities. These are aided by group discussions and other parent supports to strengthen parent-child communication skills.

In all, 280 children from lower-income families took part in the 10-year study. After collecting the first year's data to use for comparison, the researchers assigned the children randomly to the four groups. After children left the program, the researchers followed them through primary school, assessing their cognitive skills and grades at the end of each year. Then they analyzed data to look for differences that were most likely to be related to the preschool program.

Findings

Home-based training of mothers and the educational preschool both had positive effects on children's cognitive development and grades in language and mathematics. Training mothers also had a significant effect on children's general ability scores. In addition, there were positive changes in mothers' expectations of children and in their interaction in the home.

After seven years, the children of the "trained mothers" gained an edge over the children who attended educational preschools. The children whose mothers received the training and support held their gains for staying in school, achievement in language and math, academic orientation, and social development.

Conclusions

Both educational preschool and mother training programs had a positive effect on cognitive outcomes. In homes where the mothers took part in the training program there were additional gains. This effect perhaps resulted from positive changes in the mother, herself, which then affected her relationship with the child and family.

23

Keith, Timothy Z., and Keith, Patricia B. (1993) EJ486048

Does Parental Involvement Affect Eighth-Grade Student Achievement? Structural Analysis of National Data
School Psychology Review, 22(3), 474–496

Summary: This study used a large, long-term national database (NELS:88) to address the effects of parent involvement on student achievement in the middle grades. It found that parent involvement has a strong effect on eighth graders' achievement, slightly greater in math and social studies than in other subjects. A substantial portion of this effect was through encouraging homework and other academic activities.

Despite the appeal of parent involvement as a remedy for problems in American education, there are many questions about its impact on student learning. In particular, does parent involvement affect student achievement in the middle grades? Do different types of involvement have different effects? Do these effects vary for different measures of learning?

At first, the authors defined parent involvement as:

- Educational aspirations—parents' hopes and expectations for their children's education, from less than high school to higher schooling after college.
- Parent-child communication—how often children report talking to their parents about planning their high school program, school activities, and what they're studying.
- Amount of home structure—family rules about keeping up grades, doing homework, and watching TV.
- Participation in school activities—whether parents take part in PTO and visit school, and how often they contact school about volunteering.

Information about these four forms of involvement was drawn from parent surveys and cross-checked with student surveys. For example, the parent survey asks if they maintain family rules, and the student survey asks if parents check their homework and limit TV viewing. The responses are given equal weight.

Student achievement is measured by students' scores on tests in reading, math, science, and social studies. Because the NELS data is non-experimental (not designed to test a theory), the authors used a form of path analysis to create a model that would test the influence of parent involvement on eighth-grade academic achievement. In this model, parent involvement is the cause and academic achievement is the effect. Also included were any variables that may affect both the cause and effect, such as ethnicity, family income and occupation, and the students' previous achievement (past grades).

When they tested the model, Keith and Keith made an interesting observation. The four types of involvement did not seem to "fit the data." For example, parents with high aspirations don't necessarily impose a lot of structure at home or take part in

school activities. In other words, the four forms are not consistent and don't combine well. For this reason, they dropped home structure and school participation from their model.

Findings

First, as expected, the strongest influence on students' achievement was their previous grades. Students who have been doing well in school continue to do well. The second-largest effect was parent involvement, as defined by aspirations and communication.

First, as expected, the strongest influence on students' achievement was their previous grades. Students who have been doing well in school continue to do well. The second-largest effect was parent involvement, as defined by aspirations and communication. The effect size is larger than previous studies had shown and can be characterized as "a strong influence." (Each standard deviation change in parent involvement leads to a .287 standard deviation change in eighth-grade test scores.)

Second, parents become more involved as their children do well in school. Parents with higher income appear to be more involved than those with lower income. However, families from ethnic groups often labeled "at risk" (African American, Hispanic, and Native American) report more involvement than those from advantaged ethnic groups.

Third, the authors checked to see if parent involvement had as strong an effect on grades as on test scores. They found that the effect is even stronger on grades, particularly in math and social studies. In fact, the effect of parent involvement on grades was larger than the effect of previous grades.

Next, to check why parent involvement might have such a strong effect, Keith and Keith added time spent on homework to their path model. They found that children of involved parents spend considerably more time doing homework and reading. Involved parents influence their children to spend more time on academic activities they suggest, which in turn increases achievement.

Conclusions

> Our research suggests that parent involvement has a powerful effect on eighth graders' achievement . . . slightly stronger . . . in math and social studies, but a powerful influence on all academic areas. A substantial portion of the effect . . . was through homework . . . Surprisingly, time spent in weekday TV viewing had no [negative] effect on achievement. (p. 490)
>
> One intriguing finding concerning parent involvement is that it correlated more highly with, and is more predictive of, student learning than is families' SES . . . The common interpretation of this finding is that parent involvement will reduce the achievement gap between students from high and low SES. The present research suggests a less simplistic interpretation . . . . (p. 491)

Although parent involvement has a stronger effect on student achievement than family background, it may not reduce inequalities in achievement between lower- and higher-income students. When they add the indirect effects of family background, including prior grades, the total effect on achievement is greater than that of just parent involvement. High-income parents are more involved, and this leads to higher achievement.

Keith and Keith reflect that efforts to decrease the achievement gap related to family background by engaging parents will succeed only if

1. increases in parent involvement are greater for low-income than for high-income parents,
2. parent involvement has diminishing returns for achievement outcomes, or
3. parent involvement has greater effects on the achievement of low-income than high-income students.

Keith and Keith recommend that the last two possibilities be the subject of future research.

24

Lareau, Annette, and Horvat, Erin McNamara (1999) EJ590423

Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class, and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships
Sociology of Education, 72(1), 37–53

Summary: This case study of African-American and white parents in a midwestern elementary school looked at their involvement with their third-grade children and their relationship to the school. White families' social and cultural background gave them skills and assets that enabled them to work more easily with the school than black families. The authors argue that such social capital, and how schools value it, perpetuates inequality in society.

The researchers found a big difference between how educators saw their efforts to engage parents and how those efforts were seen by black and white parents.

Why and how do schools preserve social inequality? This case study explores the effects of race and culture to address this question, using the concept of social capital. (In general, capital is defined as "a stock of resources.") Lareau and Horvat contend that students with more valued social and cultural capital fare better in school than their otherwise similar friends.

Social capital includes social networks with others in the community, giving access to information about teachers and the school. Examples of cultural capital are large vocabularies, a sense of being entitled to treat teachers as equals, free time, and easily available transportation and childcare. Being white and middle class almost automatically gives parents this kind of capital. In contrast, many blacks do not have these resources available to them.

This article highlights three aspects of this process:

- The value that schools attach to social and cultural capital.
- The ways that parents activate their capital.
- The legitimacy that schools grant to displays of capital.

This case study was conducted in a midwestern town of about 25,000 people. The schools were about 52 percent white, 44 percent black, and 4 percent Hispanic and Asian. The authors chose a sample of 24 third graders, 12 white and 12 black. Most white families were middle class; most black families were lower income. They conducted in-depth interviews with these students' parents (40 in all) and with nine educators (including teachers, administrators, and school board members). In addition, they interviewed 26 adult community members to gather information about the broader racial context.

Findings

The researchers found a big difference between how educators saw their efforts to engage parents and how those efforts were seen by black and white parents. The educators thought that they fully welcomed parent involvement. They also believed

that their requests for parent involvement were neutral, effective, and designed to promote higher achievement. In reality, they selected a narrow band of acceptable behaviors. They wanted parents not only to be positive and supportive but to trust their judgments and assessments. They liked parents who deferred to them and accepted their opinions about their children.

This standard was hard for some black families to meet. Black parents had a keen sense of race relations and how they pervaded the school. Their attempts to criticize teachers were rebuffed as "unacceptable" and "destructive." "None of the white parents exhibited the wholesale suspicion, distrust, and hostility toward schools that we found among some of the black parents. Thus, the white parents were privileged in the sense that they began to construct their relationships with the school with more comfort and trust than did the black parents" (p. 44).

While many black parents approached the schools with distrust, "there were important social-class differences in how the black parents managed their concerns. Middle-class black parents were much more likely than the poor black parents to 'maneuver' and 'customize' their children's school experiences" (p. 44).

White working-class parents also had some conflict with the school. They were more likely, however, to focus on their own children's experience and to discuss the problems in terms of one teacher, rather than as a problem with "the school."

Conclusions

Based on the interviews, the authors suggest that three issues are critical to this discussion. First, the value of capital depends heavily on the setting (for example, a school that values deference rather than criticism). Second, there is an important difference between having capital and using it. For a strategy to be successful, school officials must accept it (for example, applying for a gifted program). Third, differences in capital don't always determine how children will do.

Lareau and Horvat suggest that a useful conceptual framework is that of "moments of inclusion and moments of exclusion." Moments of inclusion are the coming together of various forces to give an advantage to a child in his or her passage through life. These moments are often the result of parents' having and using social or cultural capital in ways that are valued. Examples are placing a child in a gifted program or a high track, encouraging a child to apply for college, and using networks to get a job. Moments of exclusion happen when those forces come together to provide a disadvantage. Examples are placement in a low reading group, being held back a grade, and failing to complete college preparation requirements.

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López, Gerardo R. (2001)

On Whose Terms?: Understanding Involvement through the Eyes of Migrant Parents
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA

Summary: This study examined the ways in which four immigrant/migrant families in Texas were involved in their children's education. The study found that these parents, whose children were highly successful in school, were actively engaged in supporting their children's educational development, but in ways not commonly recognized by educators and policymakers. The study explored "alternative conceptualizations of involvement activity" and examined how the concept of "parent involvement," as it is traditionally defined, limits the recognition of alternate involvement forms.

Parent involvement in these migrant households was not defined by traditionally recognized practices such as volunteering in school and helping children with homework but by teaching their children the value of education through the lessons of migrant work.

This study captured the stories told by four immigrant/migrant families' residing in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas about how they are involved in their children's educational development. The parents interviewed for the study were immigrants whose principal means of employment was migrant labor. López contends that our current definition of "parental involvement" signals a specific set of practices that have been sanctioned by the education community. As such, parents and caretakers whose involvement activities fall outside the realm of these socially specific ways get labeled as "uninvolved," "unconcerned," and "uncaring." The purpose of the study was to highlight how these families of high-performing students are already involved in school-related matters and to document and describe those practices.

A purposeful sample of four immigrant/migrant families was selected for the study on the basis of recommendations by personnel in four separate school districts. The families were identified by school personnel as those whose children were highly successful in school as defined by academic and non-academic accomplishments, achievements, and successes. All of the children in these families graduated in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. López conducted a series of observations and in-depth interviews with both immediate and extended family members in each household. Forty observations and 32 interviews were conducted over a period of six months.

Findings

López found that the parents perceived themselves as being highly involved in the educational lives of their children. In three of the four families, parents did not regularly attend such school functions as back-to-school nights, nor were they involved in PTA or in home-tutor programs. For each of the families, "involvement" was defined as teaching their children the "value of education through the medium of hard work." All of the families in the study reported taking their children at an early age to work with them in the fields and giving their children *consejos* (advice) as to the limited opportunities available if they dropped out of school. The families believed that if the children learned to work hard in the fields they would be equipped with the skills necessary to

be successful both at work and at school. These parents perceived their involvement as transmitting this work ethic to their children.

Parent involvement in these migrant households was not defined by traditionally recognized practices such as volunteering in school and helping children with homework but by teaching their children the value of education through the lessons of migrant work. Parents in this study placed an emphasis on the skills their children learned as migrants. Rather than view migrant labor as something negative, these parents celebrated their "cultural capital," viewing it as a powerful tool to teach their children specific lessons.

Conclusions

López concludes that if these parents were to be seen through a "traditional" involvement lens, "they would appear to be largely uninvolved in their children's education—since there was little formal interaction between the parents and the school, and since they rarely (if ever) reinforced particular school lessons in the home" (p. 15). López states that educators and policymakers must develop parent involvement programs that are "more organic and sensitive to an expanded, as opposed to a limited, definition of involvement" (p. 16) and that capitalize on the ways that parents are already involved in the educational lives of their children.

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Mapp, Karen L. (2002)

Having Their Say: Parents Describe How and Why They Are Involved in Their Children's Education

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA

Summary: This descriptive case study, conducted at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in Boston, Massachusetts, sought to find out how and why parents—particularly parents from low-income communities—were involved in their children's education. The goal of the study was to develop a deeper understanding of parents' perceptions about their involvement and to explore the factors that influenced parents' participation in their children's education. The study identifies social and school factors that, according to the O'Hearn parents, play a major role in influencing how and why they are involved.

The findings from this study support prior research showing that a majority of parents—regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status—want their children to do well in school and have a strong desire to help their children succeed.

This study explored how and why parents, specifically those from economically distressed circumstances, are involved in their children's education. The study also examined the factors that influence parents' involvement. The study took place at the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School, an urban school serving a racially and socioeconomically diverse population of approximately 220 students. According to survey data collected by the school about parents' participation in at-home or at-school involvement activities, 90 percent of the parents reported being involved in one or more of the school's parent programs. Between 1989 and 1995, the O'Hearn School's average median percentile scores on the Massachusetts Achievement Test for students in grades one through five rose 18 percentage points in English (from 44 to 62) and 31 points in math (from 48 to 79).

The study methodology included observations at the school site, an analysis of relevant data, and interviews with the school staff. The centerpiece of the data-collection process took the form of one-on-one interviews with 18 parents from the O'Hearn School whose children, based on family income level, qualified for free and/or reduced-priced lunch.

Findings

The findings from this study support prior research showing that a majority of parents—regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status—want their children to do well in school and have a strong desire to help their children succeed. The findings also indicate that O'Hearn parents understood clearly that their involvement helped their children's educational development.

The study also found that many of the 18 parents were involved in their children's education in ways that go beyond traditionally recognized forms of engagement, such as volunteering or participation on school governance committees. The involvement of

parents in this study included a wide range of activities taking place at home, at school, and in the community.

The most significant findings from the study indicate that, according to the 18 parents, social and school factors influence how and why they are involved in their children's education. Social factors emanating from the parents' own experiences and history influence their participation. These factors include "parents' own educational experiences in school, their own parents' involvement when they were students, their beliefs about family involvement as shaped by cultural norms and values, and the burden of their additional responsibilities and time commitments" (p. 8).

The study suggests that school staff must support a culture of family at their sites where all members of the school community are respected and honored.

School factors that influence parents' involvement center on school practices that are relational in nature. When school staff engage in caring and trustful relationships with parents that recognize parents as partners in the educational development of children, these relationships enhance parents' desire to be involved and influence how they participate in their children's educational development. Parents described a process by which these relationships were formed. This process, referred to by the author as "the joining process" has been placed in operation by the O'Hearn School: the school community *welcomes* parents into the school, *honors* their participation, and *connects* with parents through a focus on the children and their learning.

Conclusions

The limits of this study—its focus on parents from one school site and the sample size of 18 parents and seven school staff—make it impossible to generalize the findings beyond the research setting. However, these findings provide greater insight into family participation in urban schools. The study suggests that school staff must support a culture of family at their sites where all members of the school community are respected and honored. The findings indicate that "respectful relationships where power is shared between school staff and family members provide the glue that holds the community together and influences parents' involvement" (p. 15).

27

Marcon, Rebecca A. (1999)

Positive Relationships between Parent School Involvement and Public School Inner-City Preschoolers' Development and Academic Performance
School Psychology Review, 28(3), 395–412

Summary: In this article about a three-year study of 708 preschoolers in Washington, D.C., teacher reports of parent involvement were compared with levels of student achievement. It found that when parents were highly involved, their children, especially boys, performed significantly better. It also found that single parents and low-income parents were just as involved as two-parent and more affluent families.

Because parent involvement can be altered—unlike family income, gender, and ability—its potential value to young children should be carefully studied. The purpose of this study was to learn more about what types of involvement are related to positive outcomes for students. The growth of preschool programs calls for an approach that recognizes the importance of family involvement, yet also takes into account the many constraints, including limited time, on low-income families.

The author limited her definition of parent involvement to teachers' relationships with parents that teachers could readily observe. These were teacher ratings of

- parent-teacher conferences,
- home visits,
- volunteering at school, and
- extended class visits and helping with a class activity.

The researchers collected data for three groups of mostly low-income, African-American preschoolers enrolled in full-day, public prekindergarten or Head Start programs in Washington, D.C., over three years. The sample, a total of 708 preschoolers, was randomly selected in proportion to four-year-old student enrollment in subdistricts within the District of Columbia public school system. All students in the study were within the normal range of weight and height for their age.

Sixty-two teachers from 49 public schools provided data about students and their families over the three years of the study. The teachers were mostly African American. Teachers rated involvement on all four types (yes, no). Students then were grouped into three categories, depending on how many ways their parents were involved: low (0–1 type), median (2 types), and high (3–4 types).

Teachers also rated the students using the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales to measure preschoolers' development in communication, daily living skills, social skills, and motor skills. In addition, teachers rated all students using district report cards on mastery of math, verbal, social, and physical skills.

Findings

Single parents and low-income parents were just as involved as two-parent and more-affluent families. Most parents were at least somewhat involved in their child's school.

- Teachers reported low contact with 37 percent of parents; median-level contact with 27 percent; and high contact with 36 percent. Teachers had no contact with only 10 percent of parents (included in low category).
- Parents of boys were as likely as parents of girls to be involved.
- Head Start parents were significantly more involved than parents of children in prekindergarten.
- Classes with a more child-centered approach attracted more parent involvement than classes that were primarily academic and teacher-directed.

For preschoolers in this study, increased parent involvement and more active types of involvement were related to positive development and greater mastery of skills in all subjects.

When parents were highly involved, their children performed significantly better:

1. On the Vineland scales, students' scores were higher if their parents were highly involved. There was not a significant difference for children with either low or median parent involvement.
2. On the report cards, children with high parent involvement had higher ratings than children with low or median involvement.
3. Although girls had higher overall ratings, the relationship between high parent involvement and academic performance was more positive for boys than for girls.

Children tended to earn higher ratings when their parents were more actively involved. The researchers classified the four types of involvement as either active (volunteering and visiting the class) or passive (receiving information from the teacher in conferences or home visits). Active involvement was related to higher scores on both the Vineland scales (communication, daily living skills, and socialization, but not on motor skills) and report cards.

Conclusions

For preschoolers in this study, increased parent involvement and more active types of involvement were related to positive development and greater mastery of skills in all subjects. Increased involvement, whether passive or active, was especially positive for boys.

> These findings suggest that higher levels of contact between home and school may represent a positive . . . influence for children at increased risk for school difficulties due to socioeconomic factors . . . For example, among preschoolers whose parents were low in involvement, there was a clear benefit associated with parent visits to the classroom and volunteering to help with a class activity. (p. 7)

Further research is needed to determine how much involvement is needed to have a positive effect. Is it possible to find a minimum level of involvement that does the job? Is there a point where the benefits begin to decline? If there is such a level, these data suggest it is more likely to be found in active types of involvement.

The author makes an important caution about this study. While the data show a significant relationship between parent involvement in school and their child's outcomes, the reasons are unclear. It may be that working with parents changed how teachers perceived children, rather than changed how children actually performed. Or parents with better-performing children may have been more motivated to be involved. Still, she concludes that "parents, faculty, and support staff can all be encouraged by the positive benefits for young children associated with readily observable parent school involvement" (p. 410).

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Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., and Center for Children and Families at Teachers College, Columbia University (2001)

Building Their Futures: How Early Head Start Programs Are Enhancing the Lives of Infants and Toddlers in Low-Income Families
Washington, DC: Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Department of Health and Human Services
http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/ongoing_research/ehs/ehs_reports.html

Summary: This report describes initial results of an experimental study of Early Head Start, a federal program serving low-income families with infants and toddlers. The research team looked at programs in 17 sites, studying about 3,000 children and their families. At two years of age, children in the program scored higher on cognitive development scales and used more words and spoke in more complex sentences than control-group children. Their home environments were also more likely to support their development and literacy skills than those of control-group children.

The home environments of Early Head Start children were more likely to support cognitive development, language, and literacy, based on researchers' observations, than control homes.

This study examines the impact on children and families of the new Early Head Start program. Head Start was designed to prepare low-income preschoolers for school. Early Head Start is an attempt to lay a positive foundation even earlier. The program is designed to stimulate children's mental, physical, and emotional development by working with new mothers and children up to age three to support their children at home. The program includes early education, parenting education, comprehensive health and mental health services (including services to pregnant women), nutrition education, and family support services.

Between July 1996 and September 1998, the research team collected data from about 3,000 families in 17 sites. The sites covered all regions of the country, both urban and rural locations, and all program approaches. The families selected were a representative sample of the diverse families in the program.

At each program site, families were assigned randomly to the program or to a control group. Parent services follow-up interviews were conducted 6, 15, and 26 months after enrollment. Parent interviews, direct child assessments, and videotaped parent-child interactions were completed when children were 14, 24, and 36 months old. This study covers the first two interview cycles (up to 15 months after enrollment and 24 months of age), a point about two-thirds of the way through a child's time in the program. Very few differences between the program and control groups appeared at the baseline data collection. The response rate (about 75 percent) was similar in both groups.

The research team assessed children's cognitive and language development, social-emotional behavior, and health. They used measures with a history of use in research with low-income families. These included the Bayley scales of infant development and behavior, the MacArthur communicative development inventories, Achenbach's child behavior checklist, and HOME (home observation for measuring the environment).

Findings

By the time they were two years old, Early Head Start (EHS) children made modest but greater gains than the control-group children in a range of outcomes:

Table 15. Measures Used for Early Head Start Study

Outcome	EHS-Group Mean	Control-Group Mean
Bayley development index	90.1	88.1
DCI vocabulary score	56.3	53.9
CDI sentence complexity score	8.6	7.7
Aggressive behavior problems	9.9	10.5

EHS children were also less likely to score in the at-risk range of development than control children (33.6 percent compared with 40.2 percent).

On the other hand, Early Head Start did not seem to affect children's ability to control their emotions or engage in task-oriented behavior. EHS children also did not appear to be different from control children in engagement, negativity, or attention span. The research team made these findings by scoring videotaped interactions between mothers and children.

The home environments of Early Head Start children were more likely to support cognitive development, language, and literacy, based on researchers' observations, than control homes. Early Head Start mothers were more likely than control mothers to create more structure, be more responsive, and stimulate language development.

Table 16. Impact of Three Parental Actions on Early Head Start Children

Outcome	EHS Group %	Control Group %
Parents reading to children daily	57.9	52.3
Parents reading at bedtime	29.4	22.6
Parents setting regular bedtime	61.6	55.8

Early Head Start also offers programs for families to become healthier and more economically self-sufficient. The results so far were mixed. Early Head Start parents were more likely than control parents to take part in an education or job-training program. The study did not, however, find differences in parents' employment or income, or in children's health status.

The study also found that Early Head Start programs were successful in increasing the extent of services that families received. Although many control-group families also

received some services, Early Head Start programs served nearly all families enrolled. They received more intensive services focused on child development and parenting than control-group families. The impacts were greatest in programs that were able to implement the program early (by 1997, or within one year).

Conclusions

These initial findings show that Early Head Start children made greater gains in development than control-group children by the time they were two years old. The areas of gain, in cognitive and language development, have been identified by earlier research as important for literacy and school readiness. If they continue, these gains could lead to greater readiness for school among Early Head Start children.

> The initial impacts emerging from the evaluation of the new Early Head Start programs are promising. The pattern of modest but significant impacts across a wide range of child and parent outcomes at a point about two-thirds of the way through children's EHS program experience suggests that the programs are reducing the risk that children will experience poor outcomes later on. (p. 12)

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Mediratta, Kavitha, and Fruchter, Norm (2001)

Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Improvement: A Report on Education Organizing in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC,
and

Mediratta, Kavitha, Fruchter, Norm, and Lewis, Anne C. (2002)

Organizing for School Reform: How Communities Are Finding Their Voice and Reclaiming Their Public Schools (summary version)
New York, NY: The Institute for Education and Social Policy, New York University
http://www.nyu.edu/iesp

Summary: This study is based on surveys and interviews with 66 community groups organizing to improve schools in seven urban areas and rural Mississippi. It found that these groups played a significant role in creating the political context in which change can happen. These groups prompted schools to focus on critical issues and identified and built support for key interventions. Their activities also established a stronger sense of accountability between schools and communities.

Largely conducted by local, community-based organizations, this work is focused on public school parents and low-income families, as well as young people in high school. The organizations clearly intended to build the political power of low-income families and challenge public school systems that are serving their children poorly.

Funded by a consortium of foundations, this study examines the work of community groups organizing to improve public education in low-performing schools and districts. Largely conducted by local, community-based organizations, this work is focused on public school parents and low-income families, as well as young people in high school. The organizations clearly intended to build the political power of low-income families and challenge public school systems that are serving their children poorly.

The Institute for Education and Social Policy conducted this study with three research partners, California Tomorrow, Designs for Change (Chicago), and Southern Echo (Mississippi). They were also guided by a national advisory panel. Among them, the partners surveyed, interviewed, and studied the work of 66 groups in eight sites. The respondents were the organizations' directors or lead organizers. The sites studied were Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Mississippi Delta, New York City, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Washington, D.C. The data were collected from July to December 2000. There is a national report, as well as eight site reports.

The researchers developed five criteria that define groups doing community organizing:

1. Building a base of parents, young people, and/or residents who engage in collective action to address poor performance and create excellent public schools for all children.
2. Focusing on winning concrete changes in schools and practicing strategies such as mobilization (bringing together large numbers of people), direct action (picketing and demonstrations), negotiation, training, and working with other groups.

3. Supporting democratic decision making by members in all aspects of the organization.
4. Developing leaders from within an ever-growing membership.
5. Building a strong, lasting organization to alter the power relations that lead to failing schools.

Using these standards, the researchers used a snowballing method to identify groups organizing for school reform in the eight sites. The organizations studied include independent community groups, local affiliates of national networks, youth groups, advocacy groups, community development corporations, and social service organizations.

Challenging the schools' argument that students fail because their families are poor and uneducated, community-based organizations are using test scores and other data to show system-wide problems.

Findings

The field of community organizing for school reform is expanding rapidly. New groups are emerging and older groups that have organized in other areas, such as housing or public safety, are taking on education issues. In addition, national organizing networks, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation and ACORN (American Communities Organizing for Reform Now), are moving into new sites. In New York City, for example, the number of groups has expanded in the last decade from three to more than a dozen.

A key focus of all the groups is improving student achievement, and they are using research and data to make their case. Challenging the schools' argument that students fail because their families are poor and uneducated, community-based organizations are using test scores and other data to show system-wide problems. A majority are working in coalitions with other groups pressing for broad reform of public education.

Many of the groups have had "significant success." New leaders, both young people and adults, are emerging with the skills and knowledge needed to demand accountability and engage others. Some of their accomplishments are

- upgraded school facilities.
- improved school leadership and staffing.
- higher-quality learning programs for students, such as whole school reform programs.
- new resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum.
- new funding for after-school programs and family supports.

Some of the groups have also challenged unfair discipline policies and pressed for changed tracking practices. Although the study was not intended to evaluate impact, the researchers note that student grades and test scores improved in some sites as a result of these changes.

> In these schools, parents and youth are not asking for advisory participation and involvement. They are demanding the power to prod—and help—their schools toward higher levels of performance. Such demands are increasingly based on research and data. As the standards movement takes hold . . . community groups

> are adapting those standards as baselines in their organizing, and learning how to use them to leverage change. (p. 5)

For example, in District 8 in New York City, Mothers on the Move (MOM) grew out of a family literacy program. After the parents visited schools and classrooms to learn more about the schools, they formed an independent organization and organized door to door about the problems they saw. Their research of district funding practices found "massive inequities" between resources for schools in affluent Throg's Neck and the overcrowded schools in poor immigrant communities in Hunt's Point. In part as a result of their work, the district has a new superintendent. Under the new administration, facilities have been improved and new staff assigned to schools. Reading scores are up in over one-third of district schools.

Conclusions

The report makes a number of recommendations to funders. These include the need to develop greater administrative and other capacity in the organizing groups and to support organizations that provide technical help such as data analysis. It is also important to develop better ways to measure the impact of organizing and build more understanding and support for the work among foundations.

> The explosive growth of organizing to improve public education, particularly in low-performing schools and districts, makes it imperative to look intensively at this burgeoning field. Understanding the methods, strategies, and achievement of organizing groups can help build broader support for education organizing, and give new groups a road map and an arsenal of field-tested tactics for improving their schools. (p. 6)

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Miedel, Wendy T., and Reynolds, Arthur J. (1999) EJ607658

Parent Involvement in Early Intervention for Disadvantaged Children: Does It Matter? *Journal of School Psychology, 37*(4), 379–402

Summary: The authors interviewed 704 low-income parents of eighth graders about their involvement when the children were in preschool and kindergarten. All the students were part of the long-term Chicago Longitudinal Study (CLS). This article found that the more activities parents reported taking part in, the better their children did in reading, the more likely they were to be promoted to the next grade, and the less likely they were to need special education services. The parents' reports were confirmed by separate teacher ratings of parent involvement.

This study looks at whether parent involvement in early childhood programs affects their children's achievement later in school. How often do parents need to be involved to have a positive effect, and do some activities have more impact than others? The researchers interviewed 704 parents of eighth graders about their involvement when their children were in preschool and kindergarten. All the students have been part of a long-term study of children in Chicago schools. Of the students, 97 percent were African American and 87 percent low-income.

The parents reported on

- the number of activities in which they took part (six or more, to none), and
- how often they took part in those activities (weekly to less than once a month).

The parent interview asked about their child's education, their involvement, their expectations for the future, current problems, and general background. The response rate was 67 percent. Of these, 76 percent had taken part in the Chicago Parent Centers, based in Title 1 schools. The parent centers offer a variety of information, programs, and activities for parents from kindergarten to third grade. The parent activities listed were attending the parent resource room, school meetings, and assemblies; going on class trips; working in the classroom; receiving home visits; going to parent-teacher conferences, and transporting children to and from school.

Family background questions covered race/ethnicity, gender, income (free or reduced-price lunch), and education level. To confirm parents' reports, teachers were asked to rate parents' participation in school activities on a five-point scale (1 = poor; 5 = excellent). These teacher ratings closely matched the parents' own ratings of their involvement.

The researchers then gathered the students' achievement data to see if the number of activities and/or the frequency of parent participation affected

1. kindergarten and eighth-grade reading achievement (Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores).
2. rates of grade retention (not passing a grade).
3. placement in special education by eighth grade.

When teachers rated their parents' involvement more highly, students had higher eighth-grade reading scores, had lower rates of grade retention, and spent less time in special education.

Findings

- **Frequency**: How often parents were involved had a positive effect on reading achievement in kindergarten, but not eighth grade. It also had a positive impact on grade retention. Between first and eighth grades, students whose parents were frequently involved were 38 percent less likely to be held back. Frequency did not affect time spent in special education programs. These findings held across all family backgrounds.
- **Number**: The number of activities in which parents took part had a longer-lasting effect than frequency of participation. More activities were associated with higher scores on reading tests in both kindergarten and eighth grade, less time in special education, and lower rates of grade retention. Specifically, participation in five parent activities was related to a three-month increase in kindergarten reading achievement and a seven-month increase in eighth-grade reading achievement. Students with parents involved in many activities were also 39 percent less likely to be held back. These findings held across all family backgrounds.
- **Only one activity had more long-term, positive effects than the others**. Attendance at assemblies had a small impact on kindergarten reading and a larger impact on eighth-grade reading achievement.
- **Teacher ratings of parent involvement confirmed these findings**. When teachers rated their parents' involvement more highly, students had higher eighth-grade reading scores, had lower rates of grade retention, and spent less time in special education.

This finding held across all family backgrounds:

Table 17. Impact of Parent Involvement on Reading and Retention

Reading & Retention	Number of Activities	Frequency of Activities
Kindergarten reading	Positive	Positive
Eighth-grade reading	Positive	No effect
Grade retention (K–8)	Positive	Positive
Special education (K–8)	Positive	No effect

Conclusions

This study gives evidence of a long-term relationship between parent involvement and student achievement. For example, participation in five parent activities was associated with a three-month increase in kindergarten reading achievement and a seven-month increase in eighth-grade reading achievement. "As the trend in the present study indicates, parent involvement in the early years may continue to promote school success into high school, regardless of (family) background" (p. 397).

"Involved parents may not be able to increase children's IQ scores per se, but they can monitor their children's educational progress and intervene when their child gets into trouble at school. This can prevent grade retention, placement in special education, or both. Parents may be able to stop the cycle of school failure by stepping in when their child begins to falter."

In response to critics (White et al., 1992) who claim that there is little evidence that parent involvement in early childhood programs has long-term benefits for children, Miedel and Reynolds say: "Involved parents may not be able to increase children's IQ scores per se, but they can monitor their children's educational progress and intervene when their child gets into trouble at school. This can prevent grade retention, placement in special education, or both. Parents may be able to stop the cycle of school failure by stepping in when their child begins to falter." Support from the parent centers "may have provided parents with the skills and the desire to remain involved in their children's education and to monitor their school accomplishments" (p. 396).

Miedel and Reynolds point out three implications of their work:

1. Parent involvement is an important component of successful early intervention and should be emphasized in both new and established programs.
2. Implementing early parent involvement programs can promote future family-school relations and a successful transition to first grade.
3. Parent-involvement programs can be a protective factor in overcoming risk conditions such as poverty, which lead to low achievement.

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Moore, Donald R. (1998)

What Makes These Schools Stand Out: Chicago Elementary Schools with a Seven-Year Trend of Improved Reading Achievement.
Chicago, IL: Designs for Change
http://www.designsforchange.org

Summary: This report examines Chicago elementary schools with a seven-year trend of substantially improved reading achievement. Using data from the Consortium on Chicago School Research, it found that these schools were significantly more likely to have effective local school councils (LSCs) than schools with modest or no gains. In Chicago, LSCs must have a majority of parent members, elected by parents and community residents.

In 1988, the Illinois legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Act. A key feature of the legislation required local school councils (LSCs) at each public school. As a result, Chicago is the most decentralized large city school system in the country. Each LSC must have 11–12 members:

- Six parents, elected by parents and local residents.
- Two community members, elected by parents and local residents.
- Two teachers, elected by the school staff.
- The school principal.
- A student elected by students (in high schools).

Local school councils have strong powers: They select and evaluate the principal. They develop an annual school-improvement plan focus on achieving student learning standards. And they develop and approve a school budget, including about $500,000 a year in flexible funds.

The Consortium on Chicago School Research is based at the University of Chicago and staffed by a team of experienced researchers. Designs for Change is a member of its steering committee. In its report, *LSCs—Local Leadership at Work* (1997), based on survey responses from LSC members, the Consortium found that LSCs are "viable governance organizations that responsibly carry out their mandated duties . . ." More-effective LSCs

- have a thorough process for selecting and evaluating a principal.
- actively develop and monitor the school-improvement plan.
- are involved in approving and monitoring the school budget.
- press for improved academic programs.
- increase parent involvement and collaborations with community agencies.

Using teacher survey data collected by the Consortium, Designs for Change studied whether schools with more-effective school councils were also more likely to have

improved student achievement. First, the study identified two groups of schools. "No Trend Schools" were low-achieving in both 1990 and 1997 (20 percent of students reading at or above the national average). "Substantially Up Schools" were low-achieving in 1990 but improved by 1997 (37 percent of students reading at or above the national average). Then the researchers explored whether the Substantially Up schools used "distinctively different practices" from the No Trend schools.

The study found, however, that even the Substantially Up schools were not fully using a range of strategies to engage parents. The author suggests that the impact could be higher if the practice were stronger.

Findings

This study found that "elementary schools that improved reading achievement substantially from 1990 to 1997 were significantly more likely to have effective local school councils, as rated by the school's teachers" (Executive Summary, p. 9).

Using 27 indicators of school practices developed by the Consortium, the author found five areas where Substantially Up schools scored higher than No Trend schools. These areas were statistically significant after controlling for student background:

- **LSC contribution.** Teachers rated their school's LSC more highly in "having contributed to improving various aspects of the school's educational program and environment."
- **Principal as instructional leader.** The principal was rated more highly for setting a vision, involving people in decision making, and insisting on high standards for staff.
- **Principal supervision.** Principals were more likely to supervise the process of change.
- **Teacher influence on decision making.**

Less strong, but also significant, was the practice of higher teacher outreach to parents. The study found, however, that even the Substantially Up schools were not fully using a range of strategies to engage parents. The author suggests that the impact could be higher if the practice were stronger.

Conclusions

These findings contradict the view that school leadership is a "win-lose process," where the principal can be a strong leader only if the LSC and teachers are weak. In fact, the study found that "cooperative adult effort" among all the adults involved in the school was "a powerful force for improving student achievement."

> Chicago's local school councils and the social networks among parents, neighbors, and school staff that have developed as a result of LSC initiative are a unique, nationally significant model of the kind of civic engagement that Putnam and other social scientists have identified as being key to improving the quality of a community . . . LSCs and school-level decision making deserve attention and support as a proven mechanism for building social capital in Chicago, at a time when other indicators reflect a major decline in civic involvement across the city. (p. 103)

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Newman, Lynn (1995) ED385950

School-Agency-Community Partnerships: What Is the Early Impact on Student School Performance?
Menlo Park, CA: SRI International

Summary: This is a preliminary evaluation report on 40 Healthy Start Programs in California. These programs offer health, education, and social services to needy families. It found that even after a short time in the program, about one semester, students showed gains in behavior (as rated by teachers) and grades. Students who were struggling make the greatest gains.

When results were broken down by program type, only students served by the family service coordination teams showed significant increases in grades. These team-based programs involved school staff and teachers more heavily than the other programs. They were also more focused on students.

The California Healthy Start program is an attempt to reform a fragmented system of education, health, and social services for families. It aims to create a new delivery system of agencies and community organizations that work together to develop a wide range of high-quality services that support and strengthen families.

This paper reports on an evaluation of 40 Healthy Start grantees in California. The population studied was a core group of students served by the programs. The authors identified four different Healthy Start program models:

1. School-site family resource centers, where families can come for a variety of services.
2. Satellite family service centers, serving more than one school and not based at a school.
3. Family service coordination teams, working directly with families.
4. Youth service programs, based mostly at schools, but aimed at teenagers.

The author then examined which model had the most impact on student outcomes. Out of a sample of 675 students, about 270 had complete records showing outcomes before and after Healthy Start services began. The before-Healthy Start time period was about one year. The after-Healthy Start period was short, just under one semester. Measures of student achievement were: grades, attendance, and teacher ratings of behavior (including conduct and study skills). The authors also examined student characteristics (income, language) to determine if the impacts varied for different groups of students.

Findings

Students in Healthy Start made some modest but significant gains:

- Overall, students' behavior ratings improved only slightly. Students with the poorest behavior before Healthy Start made significant improvements, however.
- Grades showed marginal but significant improvement. The strongest gains were made by students with the lowest grades before Healthy Start.

- Elementary students showed more improvement in grades than older students. Boys made larger gains than girls. No significant differences were found between different ethnic groups.
- No significant differences in school attendance were found for the short period measured.

When results were broken down by program type, only students served by the family service coordination teams showed significant increases in grades. These team-based programs involved school staff and teachers more heavily than the other programs. They were also more focused on students.

Students in programs with a stated goal of improving educational outcomes had greater gains than those that didn't have such a focus.

Conclusions

"The pattern of data suggests that educationally oriented services may contribute to small gains in school performance even after relatively short participation in those services" (p. 22). Because students from families with the greatest need were less likely to experience gains before Healthy Start, this program can also help eliminate barriers to learning. The evaluation will continue for two more years.

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Peña, Delores C. (2000) EJ615791

Parent Involvement: Influencing Factors and Implications
The Journal of Educational Research, 94(1), 42–54

Summary: This study looked at how parents in one urban elementary school in Texas, with a population that was 95.5 percent Mexican American, were or were not involved and what factors influenced their involvement. The researcher identified several factors that influenced parent involvement. Parents also offered suggestions for how the school might build better collaborative relationships with parents and increase their involvement.

The study addresses the dearth of research about the involvement of Mexican-American families in their children's schooling. The school that was studied was a year-round campus with multi-age classes and a dual-language program that provided all students with the opportunity to become biliterate and bilingual in Spanish. The researcher cooperated with four teachers, two at the prekindergarten/kindergarten level and two at the third-/fourth-grade level. At each level, one class had students whose parents primarily spoke English and the other had primarily Spanish-speaking parents.

For this qualitative case study, the researcher collected data over the course of one school year (1997–1998). She conducted interviews with parents of children in two prekindergarten/kindergarten and two third-/fourth-grade classes, their teachers, and principals. She also made observations of a range of meetings and activities and examined school documents regarding parent involvement. The four participating teachers distributed letters of information/consent to a total of 75 parents. Interviews with 28 parents who agreed to participate, as well as the four teachers and the principals, were held at the convenience of the participants. Data were also gathered from home visits, parent meetings, informal discussions, observations of parent-teacher conferences, and documents such as minutes from meetings of the advisory council and parent teacher organization. The focus of the study was involvement and communication.

Findings

The study found that cultural attitudes about the role of parents, language barriers, parent cliques, parents' educational level, attitudes of school staff, and family issues, such as childcare, influenced the involvement of parents in the activities organized by the school. Although the school implemented a federally funded dual-language program, English was the preferred language at parent meetings and since no translation was provided, many monolingual Spanish-speaking parents felt their attendance was unnecessary. Some parents, even those fluent in Spanish, preferred to conduct meetings in English, which resulted in a language problem for those parents who did not speak English. Parent cliques, divided along language lines, determined who "made the most decisions for all the parents." Since most of the staff were bilingual, school assemblies, parent-teacher conferences, and workshops for parents were conducted in both languages.

Parents' literacy level was another factor that influenced their participation in the school. Staff made assumptions that parents knew what to do for back-to-school night or how to make ABC books. Most communication was print based only. No accommodations were made for those parents who did not understand, leaving them feeling intimidated and confused.

Attitudes of school staff (including the principal) made some parents feel "patronized." They felt judged negatively because of their need for assistance and that they were not welcomed. The study also found that cultural differences between U.S.-born parents and those born in Mexico influenced parents' expectations of the school and how they should be involved. Family issues, such as transportation, childcare, work schedules, and simply finding time to participate affected their participation in school activities. The school did attempt to help with transportation by providing buses for back-to-school night and by providing childcare for some of the workshops.

Parents gave recommendations for improving parent involvement in their school. These included changing the attitudes of school staff to "make the parent feel more welcome"; taking parents' interests into consideration when planning activities; recognizing that even if parents cannot be present at school, helping their children at home is also a valuable contribution; and providing parents with knowledge about how to be involved in a range of involvement opportunities.

Parents gave recommendations for improving parent involvement in their school. These included changing the attitudes of school staff to "make the parent feel more welcome"; taking parents' interests into consideration when planning activities; recognizing that even if parents cannot be present at school, helping their children at home is also a valuable contribution; and providing parents with knowledge about how to be involved in a range of involvement opportunities.

Conclusions

"First, schools need to create a hierarchy of involvement opportunities for parents, ranging from working with their children at home to participation in school decision making. Second, schools should provide parents with the knowledge in order to participate in any of these activities" (p. 53). The factors that are related to involving culturally diverse families in schools described in this study corroborate what has been found in much previous research. While the study does not discuss the influence of parent involvement on student achievement at the school that was studied, it does provide a very descriptive case example that raises awareness about some of the common barriers to parent involvement and how they might be addressed.

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Rubenstein, Michael C., and Wodatch, Jessica K. (2000) ED446191

Stepping Up to the Challenge: Case Studies of Educational Improvement and Title I in Secondary Schools
Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates, Inc. (Prepared for U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary)
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/steppingup.pdf

Summary: This policy report was prepared by an outside evaluator for the U.S. Department of Education and policymakers. The study looked at 18 high-performing Title I secondary schools (serving disadvantaged students) to determine the practices and issues that were related to improvement in those schools. Parent involvement is discussed in the chapter that looks at "non-instructional services that support student achievement." Although the study does not examine the impact of parent involvement on student achievement and provides few examples of how Title I supports parent involvement, it does give brief descriptions of activities and practices that could be useful evidence of secondary school efforts to involve parents.

The study highlighted communication practices that helped parents stay informed about school activities and their children's progress, including holding parent-teacher conferences in community centers closer to where parents live rather than at the school.

The overall purposes of the study were to (1) describe practices in 18 improving and high-performing secondary schools that serve disadvantaged students, (2) determine how Title I functioned in these schools, and (3) identify issues related to improvement in secondary school with concentrations of disadvantaged students. The schools selected for the case studies were chosen because they were engaged in comprehensive research-based school-improvement efforts to raise student achievement, enrolled a significant proportion of low-income students, and had student achievement that was either consistently high or steadily improving.

The selected schools used a variety of approaches to school improvement and reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of their varied geographic regions. Data were collected during three-day site visits through interviews, school documents, and observations of classroom instruction and daily student life. Case studies were written by the researchers who visited the sites. The findings summarize the experiences of the 18 schools and may or may not be found in similar schools that are not engaged in comprehensive reform or do not have consistently high or improving levels of student achievement.

Findings

While the study did not focus on parent involvement, it was found to be one of the non-instructional services that all of the schools saw as important, albeit difficult to achieve and maintain. In the report, brief descriptions are given of what schools do to involve parents. The study highlighted communication practices that helped parents stay informed about school activities and their children's progress, including holding parent-teacher conferences in community centers closer to where parents live rather than at the school. Some schools established parent or community liaisons that helped

keep parents in touch with the school or parent resource centers that provided workshops, field trips, and information about social services. Although parent involvement in school decision making was mandated by policies in a few schools or districts, the study claimed that most schools took parent perspectives into consideration. One example was a high school that surveyed parents about which programs and objectives they would be willing to sacrifice because of budget cuts. Activities were described in which parents participated as volunteers, observed their children's performances, or learned how to help their children at home.

Conclusions

This case study provides limited descriptions of the activities and practices that schools established to involve families. Although the study does not make a very good case for how Title I helped support the parent-involvement practices described in the schools, the authors note that "schools have used non-instructional services to foster an environment in which students can focus on learning" (p. 34). Since all of the schools in the study were improving or high-achieving, the study implies that the parent-involvement activities they describe supported student achievement.

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Sanders, Mavis G., Epstein, Joyce L., and Connors-Tadros, Lori (1999)

Family Partnerships with High Schools: The Parents' Perspective
Baltimore, MD: CRESPAR (Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk), Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 32
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/Reports/report32entire.htm

Summary: The authors explored whether particular types of parent-involvement activities influenced parents' attitudes and involvement at the high school level. The data are part of a larger study that measured perceptions of family involvement in high school from surveys of ninth-grade teachers, parents, and students in six high schools in Maryland. While most parents thought it important to be involved at the high school level, the study also indicated that 80 percent of the 423 parents surveyed needed more information about how to help their children at home, suggesting a large untapped potential within the population of parents of high school students.

Although over 90 percent of the parents surveyed agreed that parent involvement is needed at the high school level, 75 percent reported that the school had not contacted them about being involved in such school activities as volunteering, fund-raising, or committee participation.

The authors reported on surveys of 423 parents, using multiple regression analysis. Dependent variables were parent attitudes about the high school, parent involvement at home, and parent involvement at school. Independent variables were gauged by scales that measured parent reports of school activities in parenting, communication, learning at home, and decision making; frequency of requests for volunteering; and school support for parent involvement.

Findings

Although over 90 percent of the parents surveyed agreed that parent involvement is needed at the high school level, 75 percent reported that the school had not contacted them about being involved in such school activities as volunteering, fund-raising, or committee participation. This finding suggests a large untapped potential within the population of parents of high school students. The study also indicated that 80 percent of the parents needed more information about how to help their children at home. The schools that reached out to parents were more likely to be rated more positively than schools that did not make that effort. Parents who were involved in any types of activities and those whose students who were doing well in school tended to have positive attitudes toward the school. Parent education and student academic performance were significant predictors of family involvement in school and at home. Background variables—such as race, part-time or full-time work, single-parent status, number of children at home—did not make any significant differences, except that better-educated parents tended to be more involved both at home and at school.

Conclusions

The authors conclude that developing a strong overall partnership program that includes practices for different types of involvement is likely to improve parents' attitudes toward the high school. They posit that as parents' attitudes improve, more families—including those with lower educational backgrounds—will become involved in their teens' education, both at home and at school. However, the evidence they present does not help in understanding whether parents are more involved when their children do well in school or that children do well because their parents are involved.

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Sanders, Mavis. G., and Harvey, Adia (2000)

Developing Comprehensive Programs of School, Family, and Community Partnerships: The Community Perspective
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA

Summary: This case study describes how one urban elementary school was able to develop strong connections with community organizations. The school consistently outperformed other schools in the district on the state standards-based exam. Factors that were found to contribute to successful community partnerships included the school's commitment to learning, the principal's support and vision, and the school's willingness to engage with potential partners.

The case-study school, its district, and the state are all members of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). The NNPS provides "theory-driven and research-based assistance, support, and training to school, districts, and states that are committed to building permanent school, family, and community partnership programs" (p. 7). NNPS schools convene an Action Team for Partnership (ATP) and use Epstein's framework of six types of involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community) to develop partnership programs to promote student success.

Although the school has, since 1995, consistently achieved higher composite scores on the state's standards-based exam than other schools in the district, only 50 percent of its students meet the state's satisfactory standard of 70 percent. Changes in student achievement were not measured.

Semistructured interviews were conducted with

- Ten of the school's community partners. The partners represented businesses, senior citizen organizations, churches, educational institutions, private foundations, and health care institutions.
- The school principal, assistant principal, and the co-chairs of the schools Action Team for Partnership (ATP): a kindergarten teacher and a third-grade teacher.
- Three randomly selected parents, one each with a child in the third, fourth, and fifth grades.

Focus group interviews were conducted with nine randomly selected students, three each from the third, fourth, and fifth grades. Data were also collected from field observations. Researchers conducted a qualitative data analysis to identify key themes and processes.

Findings

The study identified four types of partnership activities that were student centered, family centered, school centered, and community centered. Partnership activities were primarily student and school focused, although the school hoped to expand both its partners and the kinds of programs and activities they supported.

Researchers found four factors that contributed to successful partnerships: (1) the school's commitment to learning, (2) the principal's support and vision for community involvement, (3) the school's receptivity and openness to community involvement, and (4) the school's willingness to engage in two-way communication with potential partners about their level and kind of involvement. In addition, the principal was aided in prioritizing partnership development by the district's support of the school's partnership efforts, through its provision of ongoing professional development and evaluation of principals on how well they reach out to parents and the larger community.

Community partners sponsored such events as family fun and learning nights and quarterly awards breakfasts for student academic recognition, provided volunteers, donated books and computers, and provided classroom libraries and incentives as part of a reading program.

The school under study had maintained multiple community connections over the course of three years. During the period of the study, the case school had 10 documented community partners that increased resources for the school and its students. For example, community partners sponsored such events as family fun and learning nights and quarterly awards breakfasts for student academic recognition, provided volunteers, donated books and computers, and provided classroom libraries and incentives as part of a reading program.

Conclusions

The importance of dialogue ("two-way communication") and respect ("receptivity and openness") in creating partnership were emphasized in this school, as well as the leadership of both the principal ("support and vision") and the district in prioritizing support for community involvement. The school also participates in a national partnership network. However, the model that is described is predominantly service oriented and school centered. It does not encompass public-engagement principles or models of community engagement with schools. Nevertheless, the study identifies the factors that support several types of school-community partnerships in one urban elementary school.

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Sanders, Mavis G., and Herting, Jerald R. (2000)

Gender and the Effects of School, Family, and Church Support on the Academic Achievement of African-American Urban Adolescents
In Mavis G. Sanders (Ed.), *Schooling Students Placed at Risk: Research, Policy, and Practice in the Education of Poor and Minority Adolescents* (2000)
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 141–161

Summary: This study of 800 African-American students in eighth grade examines why girls so often do better in school than boys. It found that the positive effects of family, church, and teacher supports on students' attitudes and behavior in school lead to higher achievement, for both boys and girls. However, African-American girls are much more likely to report strong support from parents and teachers and more involvement in church.

African-American girls reported greater parent and teacher support, more involvement in church, better behavior in school, more self-confidence in school, and higher grades. In short, the girls have higher levels of positive factors and lower levels of disruptive factors than African-American boys.

Research often shows that African-American girls do better in school than boys of the same background. This study seeks to explain this gap by exploring the differences between how boys and girls relate to their families, the school, and institutions in the community. In an earlier study, Sanders (1998) found that when students receive support from all three areas, the positive effects on self-confidence and behavior in school are magnified.

Sanders and Herting surveyed about 800 African-American eighth graders (slightly more females than males) attending school in an urban district. The questions asked students to rate (on a 1–5 scale)

- teacher support (e.g., feeling comfortable asking the teacher for help);
- parent support (e.g., parents praise for doing well in school);
- church involvement (e.g., belonging to a church group);
- attitudes toward school (e.g., working hard in school);
- academic self-confidence (e.g., believing you can do good work in school); and
- behavior in school (e.g., behaving well in school).

The survey also asked students about their background—poverty level, family structure, gender, and age. The majority of students were poor; almost half lived with both parents. In addition, a sample of 40 students was interviewed in depth. They talked about their attitudes toward school, plans for the future, relationships with family, teachers and friends, and activities in and out of school.

Next, the researchers examined the effect of these different factors on each other, and on students' grades, for the whole group of students, and then by gender. Grades were reported by students, not obtained from their schools.

Findings

African-American girls reported greater parent and teacher support, more involvement in church, better behavior in school, more self-confidence in school, and higher grades. In short, the girls have higher levels of positive factors and lower levels of disruptive factors than African-American boys. In general, they bring to school qualities and supports that favor higher achievement. The effects (+ for a positive effect, ++ for a strong positive effect) of the three supports on student outcomes, by gender, are indicated here:

Table 18. Effects of Three Supports That Favor High Achievement on Student Outcomes, by Gender

	Parent Support	Teacher Support	Church Involvement
Self-confidence	boys + / girls +	—	boys + / girls +
School behavior	boys + / girls +	boys ++ / girls +	boys + / girls +
Attitudes on school	boys + / girls +	boys + / girls +	—
Grades	—	boys + / girls +	boys + / girls +

Risk factors in family background were negatively related to student outcomes.

Table 19. Effects of Family Background Risk Factors That Favor High Achievement on Student Outcomes, by Gender

	Poverty	Over age in grade	Single Parent
Self-confidence	—	boys -	girls -
School behavior	girls -	boys - / girls -	—
Attitudes on school	—	—	boys - / girls -
Grades	—	boys -	boys -

The researchers further analyzed how all these factors affect each other. For both boys and girls, the results suggest that supports from church, family, and teachers are important because they influence behaviors and attitudes that go along with achievement. In other words, the influence of family, church, and teachers on students' attitudes and behavior in school are related to higher achievement, across all backgrounds.

The interviews shed further light. Although parent support is important to success in school both for boys and girls, African-American girls spend more time with family members, while boys spend more time with friends. Girls also reported more family supervision (chores, curfew) and higher expectations. Boys reported less teacher support, although support from teachers has more impact on boys' achievement than on girls' achievement.

Major limitations are that this study does not control for prior achievement, and it relies solely on data reported by students.

Conclusions

> Female adolescents in this study perceive more family and teacher support, and are more active in the church than are male adolescents. It is not surprising that African-American females also report more positive academic self-concepts and (attitudes), less disruptive school behavior, and higher achievement than the male students surveyed. (p. 159)
>
> This study also emphasizes the importance of teacher support for male and female students' school behavior. Although male students report less teacher support than do their female counterparts, the effect of teacher support on male adolescents' behavior was stronger than on female . . . behavior. (p. 157)
>
> This study thus suggests that the present and future teacher force be made more aware of the varying norms, attitudes and expectations of their students . . . This can effectively be achieved, in part, through greater communication with adults in students' families and communities. (pp. 157–158)
>
> Given this study's findings, it is important that schools, families, and community agencies and organizations use their combined resources and skills to ensure that both females and males have the opportunity to benefit from positive contact with caring, supportive adults. (p. 159)

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Scribner, Jay D., Young, Michelle D., and Pedroza, Anna (1999)

Building Collaborative Relationships with Parents
In Reyes, P., J. D. Scribner, & A. Paredes-Scribner (Eds.), *Lessons from High-Performing Hispanic Schools: Creating Learning Communities*, New York: Teachers College Press, 36–60

Summary: In this chapter, part of a larger qualitative study, the authors report their findings about parent involvement in high-performing Hispanic schools along the Texas-Mexico border. They use data based on case studies of three elementary, three middle, and two high schools, which they describe as "communities of learners." The authors discuss the formal and informal activities that parents participate in, the collaborative relationships that parents and school staff create, and how the school staff established a "people-oriented, professional atmosphere."

School staff used a combination of strategies to build collaborative relationships with parents that included learning about and building on Hispanic cultural values, stressing personal contact with parents through telephone calls and home visits, fostering communication, and creating a warm and welcoming environment.

The study looks at eight schools along the Texas-Mexico border in which Hispanic students achieve beyond state averages. Although the book's title leads the reader to expect lessons that can be applied to other schools (in the hope of improving students' performance), the authors explicitly advise caution in using the "best practices" they describe. Because each school is unique, they explain, the strategies that are discussed in the chapter are meant to be guidelines only.

Demographically, 95 percent of the students in the schools are Hispanic, 70 percent are from low economic backgrounds, 10 percent are recent immigrants, and 20 percent are migrants. All the students are either bilingual or "limited English proficient."

Findings

The majority of school staff agreed that both the school and children were well served by parent involvement, which they viewed mainly as participation in activities and events at the school. Parents were less focused on being available as volunteers and fund-raisers for the school. Their primary concern was to assist their children to be successful academically and socially and to strengthen the home-school relationship. In this study, school staff and parents collaborated in ways that focused on the children's total well-being and development and benefited the adults in both the home and school domains.

School staff used a combination of strategies to build collaborative relationships with parents that included learning about and building on Hispanic cultural values, stressing personal contact with parents through telephone calls and home visits, fostering communication, and creating a warm and welcoming environment. In addition, structures such as parent centers, teams of teachers who were responsible for a defined group of students, and parent advisory committees made it easier for parents to be involved. The skills and connections that workshops, adult education classes, and other parent programs provided were beneficial to parents in both their personal growth and their

ability to communicate with school people. At the elementary level, the emphasis was on building trust between parents and teachers. In the secondary schools, parents were involved less directly but helped create a supportive environment for their adolescents through working with parent specialists and nonteaching staff, networking with other parents, and attending their children's performances, athletic games, and awards ceremonies.

In these "collaborative" schools, parents and school staff "join together to serve the needs of all children, unencumbered by role differentiation. These are places that are neither top-down nor bottom-up; they are places where power is shared."

Conclusions

In these "collaborative" schools, parents and school staff "join together to serve the needs of all children, unencumbered by role differentiation. These are places that are neither top-down nor bottom-up; they are places where power is shared" (pp. 40–41). Parents and school staff value different aspects of collaboration, yet the differences are largely complementary. The study suggests that when schools build collaborative relationships, the best practices create an environment and structures in the school that are inviting to parents and that foster communication in ways that are personal and show cultural understanding. Since such practices were common in the high-performing Hispanic schools in the study, we can only assume that they were not as present in schools that were less effective.

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Shaver, Ann V., and Walls, Richard T. (1998) EJ561992

Effect of Title I Parent Involvement on Student Reading and Mathematics Achievement
Journal of Research and Development in Education, 31(2), 90–97

Summary: This is a study of the effect of parent involvement on 335 Title I students, in second through eighth grade, in a West Virginia district. It found that students whose parents regularly attended school-based parent workshops made greater gains in reading and math than students with less-involved parents.

These "results help to dispel the myth that poorer parents are less willing (and unable) to involve themselves in their child's education."

This study examined the effects of parent involvement on reading and math achievement.

- Does parent involvement increase reading and/or math scores for low-achieving students?
- Does this effect hold true in middle school, as well as elementary school?

The authors looked at achievement data and family information for 335 Title I (federal program for low-income children) students receiving help in reading and math. The students were enrolled in grades 2-8 in nine schools in Marion County, West Virginia. Most of the students were white.

The school district developed a series of workshops for parents that involved information, training, and discussion. Each Title I teacher scheduled at least four of these three-hour sessions (called "parent group meetings") a year. These meetings promoted five types of involvement:

1. Parenting.
2. Teacher-parent communication.
3. Parent involvement at school.
4. Parent involvement at home.
5. Program decision making.

At each meeting, parents received updates on their children's progress and took part in training designed for their interests. Topics included "Supporting Children through Crisis," "Discipline Strategies," and "Increasing Your Child's Vocabulary." Parents also got learning packets in reading and ma'', as well as training in how to use them. Because children attended the sessions, there were opportunities for parents and children to practice together.

Information about student achievement data was drawn from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS/4) results for reading and math. Students were pretested in August 1994 and tested again in May 1995. Their gains were measured against a national average (did they make as much progress during this time as the national

average would predict?). Parent involvement in the workshops and activities was graded as high or low, depending on how many activities the families attended (more or less than half).

Instead, the authors suggest that Title I programs can increase the potential for student achievement by developing well-designed parent-teacher group experiences.

First, the researchers looked at the effect of grade level and parent involvement on reading and math scores. Then they looked at the impact of family income—are families with higher income and education levels more likely to participate, and do their children tend to have higher scores?

Findings

- Students whose parents were more highly involved were more likely to make gains in both reading and math than children of less-involved parents. This was true for children from all income and education levels.
- Younger students (grades 2–4) made greater gains in both subjects than older students (grades 5–8).
- Parents are more likely to be involved when their children are in elementary school (grades 2–4) than in middle or junior high school.
- Title I students in the upper grades (5–8) are more likely to be from low-income families.
- Students from lower-income families made fewer gains in both reading and math than students from higher-income families, no matter how involved their families were. However, low-income students made greater gains if their parents were regularly involved.
- A family's income level did not affect their level of involvement. Low-income families were as likely to attend the workshops regularly as higher-income families.

Table 20. Effects of Title I Parent Involvement on Math and Reading Comprehension

Normal Curve Equivalent Gains in Skill Area	High-Parent Involvement Children	Low-Parent Involvement Children
Total math	18.3	10.6
Math application	12.9	9.3
Total reading	13.3	4.4
Reading comprehension	10.9	4.7

Conclusions

These results suggest that parent involvement, no matter what the family background, is a dynamic force influencing students' academic success. "It is imperative for Title I programs to place a special effort in involving low income parents and parents of older . . . children in school. Title I programs that employ social workers and support

personnel to assist in addressing special needs of these children and families (as in the case of this school district) are likely to promote parent involvement from this particular group" (p. 95).

These "results help to dispel the myth that poorer parents are less willing (and unable) to involve themselves in their child's education" (p. 95). Instead, the authors suggest that Title I programs can increase the potential for student achievement by developing well-designed parent-teacher group experiences.

> Long-term learning problems result in failed adult dreams and expectations, a loss of true potential. Title I remedial education programs cannot change the fact of poverty and family breakdown in America. As indicated by this research, however, school districts can improve the likelihood for success in our children by recognizing and nurturing a crucial resource for improved academic achievement—the parent-school connection. (p. 95)

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Shirley, Dennis (1997) ED421605

Community Organizing for Urban School Reform
Austin, TX: University of Texas Press

Summary: This book documents the strategies, activities, and accomplishments of the Texas Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), lead by activist and organizer Ernesto Cortes. It contains background on the IAF and four case studies of IAF work in Texas schools. It also considers IAF-driven systemic change, in San Antonio and across the state, and assessment of its success. Schools in the IAF Alliance have made fairly steady, but modest, improvements in their scores on the Texas state test. They remain well below the state average, however.

Their detailed analysis of school finance in the state gave credibility to a package of reforms the IAF advocated before the state legislature: more funding for poor school districts, smaller class size, increased salaries for teachers.

The premise of the book is that "the Texas IAF actualized a distinct new kind of parent engagement, which encompasses and goes beyond other types of involvement by recovering and enlivening the concept of citizenship, which has so agitated and enriched the western political tradition" (p. 76).

After successful actions in several Texas cities to secure better public services for low-income, Mexican-American neighborhoods, the Texas IAF gradually became involved in school reform during the 1980s. Their detailed analysis of school finance in the state gave credibility to a package of reforms the IAF advocated before the state legislature: more funding for poor school districts, smaller class size, increased salaries for teachers. Massive rallies organized by the IAF helped to ensure the passage of the Texas education reform package in 1984.

Since then, the IAF has created a network of Alliance schools in poor urban areas (Dallas, Houston, El Paso, Laredo, Brownsville) across the state. This is a formal relationship between IAF and the Texas Education Agency, which has brought special funding and waivers of cumbersome state regulations in return for school improvement.

Findings

Organizing Methods. Texas IAF organizing differs from traditional parent and community involvement in three ways:

1. Traditional involvement avoids issues of power and gives parents a passive role. This is a model of parent engagement, about citizens becoming leaders and agents of change in schools and neighborhoods.
2. The work is based in neighborhood churches. Instead of holding that churches do not have a role in public education, the IAF contends that churches are an untapped resource for community development.
3. The work is about building social capital, through such grassroots strategies as house meetings, Walks for Success, and Parents' Assemblies.

When a school is identified as a focus for organizing, local IAF leaders typically go through a series of steps:

- "One-on-one meetings," where leaders and organizers meet in the homes of active residents. In these meetings, they surface the key issues in the neighborhood and school.
- "House meetings," where residents meet to discuss their pressing concerns. Each parent talks about the problems they feel are a threat, then the group talks about how to solve them. Out of these, leaders emerge and support groups form.
- Training sessions, where parents and residents learn how the system works, the larger context for their issues, and how to use their power.
- A "Walk for Success" or demonstration of support for the local school. On a given day, core leaders (parents, teachers, clergy, students, school alumni, church members) visit every student's home. They ask for ideas and answer questions about the school. Participants write down all the concerns that surface.
- A public action, such as a Parents' Assembly, inviting public officials to meet with the community. Parents and teachers prepare statements and questions, and develop an agenda to advance. The goal is to obtain support for the agenda (repairs, increased funding, after-school programs) and show the strength of the community.

Results in Alliance Schools. Data on student performance on the Texas Assessment of Academic Standards (TAAS) show mixed results in the 22 schools in the Alliance network between 1993 and 1996. Ten schools made gains above the state average, some well above, but half were below.

- The gains are greatest in fourth grade, although Alliance schools did not make significantly greater gains than the state as a whole. Texas fourth graders' scores rose an average of 20 percentage points, while Alliance-school fourth graders gained 23 points over the four-year period.
- Middle school (eighth grade) results are lower and more uneven. Alliance schools gains (7.6 percentage points) on the average were below those in the state as a whole (13 points), and lower than the average (16 points) for disadvantaged students (eligible for free/reduced-price lunch).
- Alliance high school results are more encouraging. The state average gained nine points, while Alliance schools gained 20 points. Disadvantaged students gained 11 points.

> Even though the Alliance Schools have made headway in many areas, they have not provided a 'magic bullet' solution to the myriad problems of school reform in low-income communities . . . Yet on the other hand, as the case studies demonstrate, a host of teachers, parents, administrators, and community leaders credit the Alliance School network with revitalizing their schools and neighborhoods, and test scores hardly provide a comprehensive measure for assessing cognitive development or community improvement. (p. 220)

Conclusions

Shirley argues that schools that have joined the IAF Alliance Schools network are becoming "laboratories of democracy." "Although the Alliance Schools are still at an early stage of development, they represent one source for educational and civic renewal that should attract widespread attention in the national quest for prosperous cities with safe, diverse, and thriving schools and neighborhoods" (p. 295).

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Shumow, Lee, and Lomax, Richard (2001)

Parental Efficacy: Predictor of Parenting Behavior and Adolescent Outcomes
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association, Seattle, WA

Summary: This study, using a national sample of 929 families with children aged 10–17, examined the impact of parents' feelings of efficacy on student achievement. It found that families with higher feelings of efficacy were more involved in school and with their children at home. Their children also did better in school and reported feeling happier, safer, and more stable.

According to social theory, people who believe they can accomplish something are more likely to act in ways that lead to success. This study examined how parents feel about their ability to guide their teenagers. Then it looked at how they act as parents and at whether those actions affect their children's achievement.

The data for the study came from the Survey of Parents and Children, done by the National Commission on Children in 1994. Telephone interviews were conducted with a national random sample of parents living with their children aged 10 and over. This study uses a subsample of 929 children aged 10–17 and their parents.

Shumow and Lomax defined "efficacy" as parents' believing that they were successful in

1. having a positive influence on teenagers' academic, social, and emotional development (helping them do well in school, be happy, and be safe).
2. overcoming negative influences from their children's friends and associates (keeping them away from troublemakers, using drugs or drinking).
3. having a positive impact on schools and other community agencies for youth (improving the quality of the school, making the neighborhood a better place).

Next they looked at whether parent involvement was related to feelings of efficacy. Parents and students responded to three sets of questions about how parents are involved with their children:

- Involvement in school: attending events, talking to teachers, attending a parent meeting, helping at school, working with a youth group (parent reports).
- Monitoring children's activities: knowing who their children are with when they're not home, making sure their children know how to contact them (parent and student reports).
- Communicating with their children: talking with children about drugs, dating, problems with friends or family, and values (ptudent reports).

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Finally the researchers related these findings to how well the students were doing. Performance at school was measured from parents' reports on students' grades, academic level (advanced, regular, or remedial), and behavior at school. Social and emotional well-being was measured from students' reports of emotional well-being (feeling nervous, sad, or pressured), optimism (looking forward to the future), and worries (feeling unsafe or threatened).

Families who live in safe, higher-income neighborhoods with good programs for young people had higher efficacy than families living in lower-quality areas.

Findings

Shumow and Lomax found that the data supported their theory. Family background, income, and neighborhood will affect feelings of efficacy. Efficacy in turn will affect how parents are involved in their children's education and upbringing. And this involvement will in turn affect children's achievement and feeling of well-being. In other words, families with higher feelings of efficacy were more involved in school and with their children at home and reported that their children did better in school and felt happier, safer, and more stable.

- Families who live in safe, higher-income neighborhoods with good programs for young people had higher efficacy than families living in lower-quality areas.
- Family income alone did not predict feelings of efficacy. In other words, higher-income families did not always have higher feelings of efficacy, nor did low-income families always report lower feelings of efficacy.

There was a positive association between parents' feelings of higher efficacy and how closely they monitored their children and were involved in school. Parent efficacy also went along with talking to their teenagers, but the level varied by race and ethnicity.

Several racial and ethnic differences appeared:

- Family income and education level was not as connected to feelings of efficacy in Hispanic families as it was in white and African-American families.
- Quality of the neighborhood was not as connected to feelings of efficacy in African-American families as it was in white and Hispanic families.

A major limitation of this study is that it relies solely on parent and student reports of achievement and other outcomes.

Conclusions

"Given the link between parental efficacy, developmentally appropriate parenting behaviors, and adolescent outcomes, one important goal of programs for parents of adolescents might be to bolster their sense of efficacy" (p. 7).

Shumow and Lomax caution that there is little research on how to change parents' feelings of efficacy. There are, however, studies that show it is possible to bolster the efficacy of people in areas other than parenting. Because of difficulties that often surface when children reach adolescence, the authors suggest that programs should be targeted to parents when their children are younger, then continued through high school.

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Shumow, Lee, and Miller, Joe D. (2001) EJ628426

Parents' At-Home and At-School Academic Involvement with Young Adolescents
Journal of Early Adolescence, 21(1), 68–91

Summary: Using data from a national study of adolescents, this study looked at a subsample of 60 families to examine the impact of parent involvement during the middle grades. It found that involvement at home contributed to positive attitudes toward school, while involvement at school contributed to higher grades.

Parents of struggling and average students provided more help at home than parents of successful students. Parents of successful students were more involved at school.

In this study, Shumow and Miller compare the impact of home-based and school-based parent involvement on student achievement. Then they examine the possible difference that context and personal characteristics make in the level, type, and effect of parent involvement.

Parent involvement at home and school was based on parent reports about

- whether and how often they helped their children with homework.
- the number of visits made to the school to discuss academic progress.
- the level of involvement in the school's parent organization.
- the level of attention they paid to local school issues.

Student academic outcomes were measured by GPA in seventh grade, eighth-grade math and science test scores, and student reports on their attitudes toward school.

The information used in this study came from a section of the Longitudinal Study of American Youth (LSAY) that included extensive interviews with parents of 60 students. These students were selected randomly from 50 participating middle schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas across the United States. First, the researchers looked at the relationship between each type of involvement and personal characteristics. These were parent and student gender, parents' income and education level, and students' prior success in school (struggling, average, or successful). Then they examined the relationships among these characteristics. Finally, they compared the relationship of parents' reported at-home and at-school involvement to students' academic outcomes.

Findings

Taken together, parent involvement in both settings had a significant effect on all student outcomes. When analyzed separately, however, each type of involvement was related to different outcomes.

- At-home involvement was related to positive student attitudes about school. However, it was negatively associated with grades and test scores. This may be because parents tend to help more with homework when students are struggling in school.
- In contrast, at-school involvement strongly contributed to higher grades but was not related to test scores or student attitudes toward school. Parents might obtain

information when at school that allows them to help their children earn higher grades. Or perhaps teachers have more favorable attitudes toward students whose parents are involved at school.

When checking for the relationship between personal characteristics and type of involvement, Shumow and Miller found that

- As parents' education level increased, they reported being more involved with their children's education.
- Fathers and mothers reported being equally involved at home, but mothers were more involved at school than fathers. The higher their education level, the more mothers were involved at school. Fathers of all education levels reported being less involved at school than mothers.
- Student gender did not appear to make a difference in the level or type of parent involvement.
- Parents of struggling and average students provided more help at home than parents of successful students. Parents of successful students were more involved at school.
- The more parents were involved at home, the more students felt it was important to perform well in school.

This study had a small sample, only 60 families. It also relied solely on data reported by students and parents.

Conclusions

Shumow and Miller concluded that parent involvement in education at home and at school was positively related to young adolescents' academic outcomes. "The relation found between the young adolescents' past school adjustment (success in school) and school orientation (attitudes toward school) indicates that successful children might have been socialized to the importance of education by families that have made a consistent long-term commitment to education" (p. 86). Given that at-home and at-school involvement may have different effects on students, the researchers underscore the importance of specifying the form of parent involvement being studied or targeted in program development.

The findings related to personal characteristics also have interesting implications. Because fathers' involvement in school activities is low, their investment in their children's schoolwork might be less visible to teachers and administrators. Even though this study showed that fathers report helping their young adolescents at home as much as mothers, schools might overlook them in designing parent-involvement programs that could benefit student achievement. Although parent education programs improve the quality of help parents provide their children at home, the more challenging content of middle and junior high studies could pose problems.

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Simon, Beth Shara (2000)

Predictors of High School and Family Partnerships and the Influence of Partnerships on Student Success
Baltimore, MD: Doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University

Summary: This study used a large, long-term national database (NELS:88) to explore how high schools, families, and communities connect to support student achievement. It found that these connections have a positive influence on student success. It also found that schools' practices to engage families increase parent involvement.

How do schools, families, and the community connect to support adolescents? Although researchers have looked at partnerships in elementary and middle schools, much less is known about high schools. This study examines family and community connections with high schools, the effects on students' success, and the influence of high school outreach on family involvement.

This study used NELS:88 data for about 11,000 students, those with complete data through the follow-ups in 1990 and 1992. Family involvement was measured by family, school administrator, and student responses to questions about

- **parenting**: parents monitoring students' time and activities, making decisions about rules, discussing school and college plans, spending fun time together, attending college planning workshops.
- **communicating**: school contacting parents about program, courses, and information to help student; parents contacting school about student's program and courses.
- **volunteering**: parents helping at school, taking part in the parent organization.
- **learning at home**: parents reporting knowing how and what teen is doing in school; students reporting talking with parents about courses, activities, and grades; both report talking about school.
- **decision making**: parents reporting having enough/wanting more influence on school policies; administrators reporting on parent influence on school policies (like tracking, hiring, discipline, budget).
- **collaborating with community**: parents participating in community service programs, establishing partnerships with business and community groups.

Student achievement measures include test scores and grades in English and math, number of course credits, absences, school behavior, and school preparedness. Simon used regression analysis to test the influence of race, ethnicity, family structure, gender, prior student achievement, and family income and background.

School outreach to families was measured by reports on whether the school contacted parents about

- teens' academic program, plans after high school, and course selection.
- teens' attendance and behavior.

- parents' taking part in school fund-raising or volunteer work.
- schools' providing parents with information on how to help teen at home with skills or homework.

Through a series of regression analyses, Simon tested how parents' reports on their high schools' outreach activities predicted involvement in parenting, volunteering, and learning at home activities. She then tested how administrator reports of schools' outreach predict their ratings of families' involvement in parenting, volunteering, and decision-making practices.

This study found stronger relationships between partnership practices and student outcomes that were logically linked. For example, parents' attending college-planning workshops and talking to students about college were linked more to better grades and courses completed than to behavior and attendance.

Findings

Simon found that families and communities do participate in a range of partnership activities to support students through high school. Parent involvement increases with support from the school. For example, when school staff members contact parents about these opportunities, parents are more likely to

- attend planning workshops and talk to their teenagers about college and employment.
- volunteer as audience members at school activities.
- work more often with their teenagers on homework.
- talk with teenagers more often about school.

Her analysis also found positive effects of partnerships on students' success. Involvement in parenting, volunteering, learning at home, and decision-making activities was related to

- higher grades in English and math.
- more completed course credits in English and math.
- better attendance and behavior.
- increased preparedness for class.

Simon found stronger relationships between partnership practices and student outcomes that were logically linked. For example, parents' attending college-planning workshops and talking to students about college were linked more to better grades and courses completed than to behavior and attendance.

Conclusions

Contrary to popular belief, many teens do spend time with their families, and families matter for teens' school success. Simon's findings suggest that schools can increase family partnerships by reaching out to parents. She cautions, however, that NELS:88 data are limited because NELS:88 does not address the quality of families' or schools' involvement practices. Ideally, research should be able to contrast schools with strong and weak partnerships to test the influence of these varying practices on student outcomes and family involvement.

This study concludes that while families already support student learning in various ways during high school, schools may influence the directions in which families guide teenagers' success in school. Students and their families deserve research-based partnership programs to ensure student success in high school and later in life. Simon calls for research to "shed new light on the complex relationships among schools, families and communities to help all students succeed" (p. 239).

> Comprehensive partnership programs send consistent messages to all families that their involvement is wanted and needed to best support teens as learners. Unless high schools meet challenges to communicate with and invite all families to partner with the school, some families may miss out on important opportunities to support their teens' education. (p. 131)

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Smrekar, Claire, Guthrie, James W., Owens, Debra E., and Sims, Pearl G. (2001) ED459218

March Towards Excellence: School Success and Minority Student Achievement in Department of Defense Schools
Peabody Center for Education Policy, Peabody College Vanderbilt University
http://www.negp.gov/reports/DoDFinal921.pdf

Summary: In this report presented to the National Education Goals Panel, the authors state that in schools operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) the performance of African-American and Hispanic students on standardized tests is among the highest in the nation. This descriptive exploratory study analyzes the factors believed to play a role in narrowing the performance gap between "majority and affluent students and minority and disadvantaged students" in DoDEA schools. The researchers suggest that the high levels of achievement of minority students is due in part to community contributions and the community's role in setting an expectation of parent involvement. Based on their findings, the authors recommend policy for state and local public education decision makers.

In examining settings that are effective in raising achievement of African-American and Hispanic students, the researchers sought to illuminate strategies and tactics that could guide others working to meet the challenge of improving the performance levels of similar students. Stimulated by the "impressively high" performance of eighth-grade students in reading and writing on the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the study looked at 15 representative middle schools operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) in five domestic and five overseas military districts.

The schools varied in size and composition, but African-American and Hispanic students made up 40 percent of the average enrollment of DoDEA schools (similar to the proportion of minority students in the state of New York) and half of all DoDEA students qualified for free and reduced-price lunch (the common measurement used to determine low-income households). The number of students enrolled in both domestic and overseas DoDEA schools is 112,000, comparable to the enrollment in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) district.

The researchers carried out interviews of 130 educators, parent leaders, and counselors in middle schools in both domestic and overseas military districts. They collected samples including curriculum guides and staff development plans from each site, and those samples combined with classroom observations contributed to the information. This description of findings focuses on the expectations and educational values of parents and patterns of involvement and on out-of-school influences on achievement.

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Findings

Based on interview data, the superiority of achievement levels in DoDEA schools was explained by a complex "achievement equation" composed of many variables. Several contributing factors were examined and contrasted with urban public schools in the United States to illustrate the supports for achievement, including teacher quality, high academic expectations, and policy structures. For example, DoDEA school parents tended to have more stable income and housing than civilian families, though mobility and transience were more like urban schools. A high value was placed on education and training within the military community. There was a culture of order and discipline that created seemingly ideal conditions. In addition, a "corporate commitment" to education by the U.S. military resulted in personnel having a clear duty to attend parent conferences and volunteer in schools.

The schools are also smaller than most public schools, and recent research suggests lower-income and minority students benefit most from smaller middle and high schools. Also in place is a "chain of concern" within the system to attend to children's needs and anxiety when separated from parents who are deployed, described as "a social organization within the school."

In response to the high priority given to school-home partnerships by the DoDEA, schools enhanced communication to families through electronic mail and voice mail "info lines" easily accessed by parents. Also, parents were encouraged to serve on school advisory panels and participate in policies and programs. While 94 percent of military parents hold at least a high school diploma, 60 percent of the families earn below-average salaries. However, noncash benefits provide "an array of social and material resources . . . organized around a network of support for families" (p. 37). These programs include childcare, health care, housing (though not ideal), and a safe community. Unlike most urban communities, the base regulations on family conduct enforce "community standards." The schools are also smaller than most public schools, and recent research suggests lower-income and minority students benefit most from smaller middle and high schools. Also in place is a "chain of concern" within the system to attend to children's needs and anxiety when separated from parents who are deployed, described as "a social organization within the school."

Schools embrace social capital across racial groups because of the explicit affiliation among members. Shared values, norms, and attitudes promote trust, facilitate open communication, and produce purposeful and meaningful activities that benefit students and adults. The authors suggest that two of the salient characteristics of the military community—continuity of care for children and corporate commitment to public education—are applicable to the civilian sector.

Conclusions

Although the "village" culture of support associated with life on a military base allows for a strong sense of stability, community, and familiarity that is not typical of contemporary urban life, the authors delineate a number of suggestions from that culture that might improve education for students in the civilian sector. Recommendations for public school policy include

- academic focus and high expectations for all;
- continuity of care for children;
- corporate commitment to public education;

- centralized direction setting balanced with local decision making;
- policy coherence and efficient flow of data, regarding instructional goals, parent-teacher relationship, assessments, accountability, and professional development;
- sufficient financial resources;
- staff development that is job-embedded, intensive, sustained over time, relevant to school-improvement goals, and linked to student performance; and
- small school size, conducive to trust, communication, and sense of community.

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Starkey, Prentice, and Klein, Alice (2000) EJ618579

Fostering Parental Support for Children's Mathematical Development: An Intervention with Head Start Families
Early Education and Development, 11(5), 659–680

Summary: This article describes two experimental studies of a four-month program that engaged about 30 families to develop math skills in Head Start (preK) children. Another 30 families were assigned to two control groups. At two sites in the San Francisco area, one serving African-American families and the other Latino families, staff gave classes for mothers and children and loaned math activity kits for use at home. In both sites, the researchers found that parents were willing and able to work with their children on math when given training and materials. The children in the program developed greater math knowledge and skills than the control-group children.

Research suggests that the achievement gap between low- and middle-income students in mathematics may stem from differences in young children's development of informal math knowledge and skills. Both the home and preschool settings for poor children offer limited opportunities to learn about math.

This study examines the contribution that low-income parents can make to their children's math readiness when provided with training and activities to work with their children. The researchers studied two interventions at Head Start programs in the San Francisco area, one serving mostly African-American families, the other serving Latino families. Each one included a family math course to help parents support their children's math development, plus a library of activities and materials to use at home. The children were between four and five years old.

Findings

Study 1: Intervention with African-American Families
Head Start staff identified a pool of families who met three criteria:

1. The child did not have special needs.
2. At least one parent did not have a mental health or substance abuse problem.
3. The family was low-income according to federal guidelines.

Families meeting these criteria were invited to take part in the study. The families that agreed were assigned randomly to an intervention or a control group. All the families but one in each group were African American. The number of boys and girls in each group was the same. In all, there were 28 mother-child pairs. Intervention and control families were assessed in the fall (pretest) and in the following spring (posttest).

The program had two components:

1. Eight family math classes, offered every other Saturday morning for four months. Lunch was served. Most mothers and children attended between six and eight classes.

2. Access to a library of math kits to use at home. At the end of each class, families could borrow up to three kits. The average family borrowed 11 kits over the four months.

Two experienced African-American teachers taught the classes. First, they demonstrated an activity for the group, playing the parts of mother and child. Then they handed out materials to each family, offering advice from table to table. Teachers helped parents assess children's progress and steer children to easier or harder next steps depending on how they were doing. At the end of each class, teachers opened the math library. They kept records of the number of kits that families borrowed and how they used them. Average attendance was between six and seven classes; each family borrowed an average of 11 kits over the eight weeks. Control-group families did not attend classes or have access to the library.

At the end of each class, teachers opened the math library. They kept records of the number of kits that families borrowed and how they used them. Average attendance was between six and seven classes; each family borrowed an average of 11 kits over the eight weeks. Control-group families did not attend classes or have access to the library.

The assessments covered numbering skills, numerical reasoning, spatial reference, and emergent literacy. At the pretest, the control and intervention group children's mathematical knowledge was about the same. Most children needed help and their answers were no more accurate than could be predicted by chance. Over the prekindergarten year, the intervention children's informal math knowledge made "extensive developmental change," but the comparison children's did not. The researchers controlled for prior test scores and other factors. The program supported math knowledge, not literacy.

Table 21. Proportions of Correct Answers in Math and Literacy Tests in Study 1

Task	Intervention Group		Control Group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Emergent literacy	.35	.33	.27	.27
Math composite	.60	.75	.61	.64
Number composite	.51	.70	.55	.58

Study 2: Intervention with Latino families

Thirty-one mother-child pairs were selected in the same way as for Study 1. The two experienced teachers were Latino. In addition, a bilingual experimenter assessed children whose home language was Spanish. Attendance in this study was about the same as for Study 1. The other change in study design was that the children were assessed in geometric reasoning rather than spatial reference.

In this study, both the control and comparison groups had higher scores at the end of the year. The intervention group, however, developed more extensive math knowledge, controlling for pretest scores, than the control group.

Table 22. Proportions of Correct Answers in Math and Literacy Tests in Study 2

Task	Intervention Group		Control Group	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Emergent literacy	.16	.31	.16	.30
Math composite	.38	.65	.43	.57
Number composite	.33	.66	.34	.55

The effects of the intervention were specific to the children's math skills. It was not designed to improve literacy, and it didn't. The researchers contend that curricular supports must be tailored to specific areas of learning.

Conclusions

The program was effective in increasing children's informal mathematical knowledge development. At the end of the program, fewer children in the intervention performed in the lower-end range and more in the upper-end range. The children in the control group did not make comparable gains. No difference was found due to ethnicity or gender. The effects of the intervention were specific to the children's math skills. It was not designed to improve literacy, and it didn't. The researchers contend that curricular supports must be tailored to specific areas of learning.

Two key factors in the program's success, the authors believe, were the work of parent liaisons and the provision of math kits to use at home. In each study, a teacher from the local Head Start program served as a liaison with families. The liaisons contact each mother before each family math class to find out if there were barriers to their attending. The barriers that arose most often were childcare, transportation, and scheduling conflicts. These were overcome by providing childcare during the class, arranging carpools, and encouraging mothers to send a substitute to class when needed.

"Our study demonstrates that an important step toward achieving . . . readiness for school is to provide parents with the tools they need to support their children's informal mathematics development. Across the two intervention studies, we found low-income parents willing and able to support this important area of their children's development once they were provided with the training to do so" (p. 676). Parents' attendance was high and they checked out materials and used them at home.

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Trusty, Jerry (1999) EJ598231

Effects of Eighth-Grade Parental Involvement on Late Adolescents' Educational Experiences
Journal of Research and Development in Education, 32(4), 224–233

Summary: This analysis of NELS:88 and 1994 follow-up data found that parent involvement in eighth grade is related to students' postsecondary education plans six years later. Two years after high school, students' reports of parent communication and support at home seem to pay off in plans to complete a bachelor's degree or more.

For students, families are a continuing presence, while schools are shorter-term resources. This challenges schools to focus beyond their boundaries and recognize the importance of what happens at home.

Although steadily increasing numbers of students expect to earn college degrees, we know little about the effects of parent involvement beyond high school. Trusty set out to investigate the ways home- and school-based parent involvement—as measured at grade 8—relate to students' educational expectations two years after high school. Using NELS:88 parent and student reports, he analyzed effects of the following parent-involvement factors:

- School-based involvement: taking part in PTO, attending school meetings and events, visiting classes, talking to school staff, and acting as a volunteer.
- Home-based involvement: talking about school programs and activities, discussing plans for high school and postsecondary education.

Trusty analyzed data from nearly 10,000 participants in NELS:88 and the third follow-up in 1994. He also controlled for the influence of family income, occupation, and education on students' plans. In the 1994 follow-up (two years after high school for most students), students were asked about the highest level of education they expected to attain. The author then examined the influence of parent involvement at eighth grade in the follow-up data.

Findings

If students felt that their parents communicated with them and supported their learning when they were in eighth grade, they were more likely to have plans to continue their higher education two years out of high school. Family income and education also had a strong influence on whether students expected to earn at least a bachelor's degree. At higher-income levels, the effects of parent involvement were stronger. As many other studies also report, low-income parents' communication with teachers and counselors tended to be in response to their students' behavior or academic problems.

Regardless of family income and background, three forms of parent involvement had significant effects on students' expectations. They are listed in order of strength:

- Students' reports of parents' home-based involvement.
- Parents' reports of their involvement in parent organizations at school.
- Parents' reports of their home-based involvement.

An increase of one standard deviation in parent-reported involvement in the school's parent organization during eighth grade was related to a 22 percent increase in the odds of their students' having high educational expectations six years later. But a one standard deviation increase in student-reported home-based parent involvement in the eighth grade was related to a 58 percent increase in the odds of the students' having high expectations six years later.

Students' reports of their parents' involvement showed the strongest effects. In other words, the author suggests, what parents do has a greater effect if it gets through to their children. The more students perceive their families' involvement and support, the farther they expect to go in school.

Conclusions

For students, families are a continuing presence, while schools are shorter-term resources. This challenges schools to focus beyond their boundaries and recognize the importance of what happens at home. Trusty suggests, for example, that school staff should focus on supporting families to communicate with their children and support their work in school.

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Van Voorhis, Frances L. (2001)

Interactive Science Homework: An Experiment in Home and School Connection
National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin, 85(627), 20–32

Summary: This article describes the results of a study on involving families in 253 middle school students' homework. Using Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS), an interactive homework process developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, sixth- and eighth-grade teachers sent weekly assignments home with information about how students could engage their families. TIPS students earned significantly higher grades than students who did non-interactive homework.

Research suggests that teachers need better information about the purpose of homework and how to design assignments that promote useful interactions between parents and students.

Although homework is assigned every day, little thought has gone in to making it a more-effective learning tool. There is little agreement on how much should be assigned, what it should accomplish, or how it should be designed. Research suggests that teachers need better information about the purpose of homework and how to design assignments that promote useful interactions between parents and students.

Joyce Epstein and her colleagues at the Center for School, Family, and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University have developed an interactive homework program. Called TIPS, Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork, it includes sample assignments in different subjects. Each one has clear learning goals and instructions for students about how to involve family members. Parents do not need to have much knowledge of the subject. There is also a section on home-school connections so that parents and students can give feedback to the teacher.

The study compares the effects of TIPS homework with homework that has the same content, but is not interactive. Three classes from two sixth-grade teachers, and two classes from two eighth-grade teachers took part in the study, for a total of four teachers and 253 students. The students were a cross-section of those in the school (53 percent white; 36 percent African American; 11 percent multiracial, Asian, Hispanic, and Russian). In sixth grade, they were in low, average, and honors classes; in eighth grade they were in average and honors classes. The teachers assigned TIPS homework to six classes, and non-interactive homework to four classes. The study covered 18 weeks, or two marking periods.

Each family received a letter at the start of the year, describing the homework their children would be assigned. Only the families in the TIPS classes were told about how students would involve them in their work. Each teacher assigned an activity each week and included homework-related questions on student tests. At the end of the study, students, and parents filled out surveys about their experience and reactions.

Van Voorhis also collected information about the students' backgrounds. This included mother's education level, student's prior achievement and ability level, race, gender, and grade. This data was used to control for their possible effects on the results.

Findings

1. Students completing TIPS homework reported higher levels of family involvement than students doing non-interactive homework. Over 80 percent of TIPS students said their families were "sometimes, frequently, or always involved" in their science homework. In contrast, over 80 percent of students with non-interactive science homework said their families were "never, rarely, or sometimes involved." Although 75 percent of the TIPS students said their mothers or fathers helped them, 25 percent said they got help from siblings, relatives, and friends.
2. TIPS students also reported that their families were not involved in other types of homework. In other words, family involvement levels did not differ for math or language arts, subjects not using the TIPS program.
3. Both TIPS and non-interactive homework students did their homework about equally well. All the assignments were well-designed, linked to their teachers' science units. About 75 percent in both groups turned in their homework. Students who liked the assignment and had families that were involved were more likely to do the homework and do it well.
4. Students who had been doing well in science, and who turned in their homework, were more likely to earn higher grades. But after controlling for prior grades, family background, and amount of homework turned in, TIPS students earned significantly higher grades than the non-interactive homework students.
5. Students and parents liked the assignments and suggested that TIPS be used the next year in school. Teachers also liked a regular schedule of science homework, linking the content to science unit tests and guiding students to share their work in science with their families.

Conclusions

> Results of this study show that well-designed, teacher-generated homework assignments in science can help students practice skills, prepare for the next class, participate in learning activities, develop personal responsibility for homework promote parent-child relations, [and] develop parent-teacher communication . . . . (p. 12)

> Much of homework today is monotonous, pointless, discouraging to students, and disruptive of family time. Professional development time should be allocated to help teachers learn about the importance of well-designed homework, to share ideas about science, and to develop meaningful homework assignments that match the creativity found in many teachers' classrooms. TIPS interactive homework is one approach that helps teachers develop their skills in designing better assignments that increase students' skills and inform parents of what is going on in the classroom. (p. 13)

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Wang, Margaret C., Oates, Jane, and Weishew, Nancy L. (1997)

Effective School Responses to Student Diversity in Inner-City Schools: A Coordinated Approach
In Haertel, G. D., & M. C. Wang (Eds.), *Coordination, Cooperation, Collaboration,* Philadelphia, PA: The Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory at Temple University, 175–197

Summary: In this chapter, the authors report on "case scenarios" of three schools to illustrate the potential of the Community for Learning Program (CFL) to improve student learning in urban schools. The authors describe a variety of practices that are specific to each site, but note that no single component or practice can account for improvements in learning. Rather it is "an integrated system of delivery that considers the needs of the students" that is crucial to fostering student improvements.

"At the core of the program's design is over 20 years of research and school-based implementation experience of two widely implemented programs, the Adaptive Learning Environments Model and [Comer's] School Development Program, and CEIC's program of research on fostering educational resilience through building connections among school, family, and community" (p. 176). Specifically, CFL includes three major components: school development, the family-community for learning model, and the Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM). The program seeks to improve student achievement, particularly for "those at the margins of the achievement distribution" (for example, bilingual, Chapter I, and special education students). Other areas that CFL hopes to improve include positive student perceptions about their school and "patterns of active learning and teaching" that are consistent with research on effective teaching practices.

The reported findings are based on Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) of student surveys and district standardized test scores in reading and math. Case scenarios of two elementary schools (in Philadelphia and Houston) and one middle school (in Philadelphia) indicate that, although they differ in terms of specific demographics, school organization, size, and implementation of the CFL program, these schools share "significant positive patterns of intended program outcomes." The findings are attributed to the "site specific and strategic" combination of successful practices in an "integrated system of delivery."

Findings

In the domain of parent involvement, CFL supports a "shared partnership approach" and encourages schools to actively involve families through "communication and cooperation between home and school." How the schools implement the CFL features depends on the strengths and constraints of the school. The door is open in various ways in these schools for parents. They may assist in classrooms, tutor students, take leadership in planning events, act as decision makers, and participate in workshops

and classes. They might work with staff and neighborhood agencies to plan activities that strengthen bonds between parents and children around learning. In one school, family members participate on leadership teams that help guide the implementation of CFL.

"Educational reforms . . . that aim to address the deepening problems faced by children and families in a variety of at-risk circumstances in this nation's inner cities must provide a broad-based coherent approach including family, school, and other community resources."

The achievement data over two years show that in schools and classrooms that implemented the CFL program, fewer students than expected were in the bottom 20 percent of reading and math and more than expected scored in the top 20 percent (with one exception). Attendance increased in the middle school. Student perceptions about the learning environment in their classroom and school were generally higher than those of students in comparison schools and classrooms.

Conclusions

In the schools presented as cases, the CFL program appears to have had an early positive impact on student achievement and on students' perceptions about their classrooms and schools. The program's approach—linking comprehensive school change to "rooted connections with family and community" and encouraging a variety of strategies to involve parents—would seem to contribute to the positive trends reported. However, there are two other components of CFL: the School Development aspect, which includes a planning and management team and a mental heath team; and the ALEM "instructional delivery system." This report emphasizes that it is the integration of the three successful practices that accounts for the improvements in the case-study schools. "Educational reforms . . . that aim to address the deepening problems faced by children and families in a variety of at-risk circumstances in this nation's inner cities must provide a broad-based coherent approach including family, school, and other community resources" (p. 186).

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Westat and Policy Studies Associates (2001)

The Longitudinal Evaluation of School Change and Performance in Title I Schools, Volume I: Executive Summary
Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Planning and Evaluation Service
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/lescp_highlights.html

Summary: This is a long-term study of the impact of standards-based reform practices on student achievement in 71 Title I schools. It found that teacher outreach to parents of low-performing students was consistently related to improved student achievement in both reading and math. Of the eight other practices studied, only professional development that was highly rated by teachers was as consistently linked to student gains in both subjects.

Title I, the largest federal program in elementary and secondary education, has directed federal funds to schools in low-income areas since 1965. Although many evaluations of Title I have looked for school practices that improve student achievement, this study is the first to examine the impact of standards-based reform. From 1996 to 1999, researchers followed the progress of students in 71 high-poverty schools as they moved from third to fifth grade. Their aim was to test the effects of changes in teaching practice called for by advocates of higher standards.

The 71 schools in 18 school districts were in seven states where standards-based reforms were underway. Although all were affected by reform policies (standards, assessments, and accountability), the extent of implementation varied. While not a representative sample, these schools provide a good picture of how standards-based reforms are being carried out. In over 85 percent of the schools, more than half the students were from low-income families.

Data sources included standardized reading and math test scores (SAT-9), teacher surveys, interviews with administrators and principals, classroom observations, focus groups of school staff and parents, and school district policies. The study used an advanced statistical method (hierarchical linear modeling) to analyze the relationships between different practices and student outcomes.

The study examined these practices: visibility of standards and assessments, basic or advanced teaching techniques, teacher preparation, teachers' skills in math instruction, high or low ratings of professional development, focus on assessment and accountability, district standards policies, and outreach to parents.

Outreach to parents measured the extent to which teachers communicated with parents of low-achieving students through

- meeting face to face.
- sending materials on ways to help their child at home.
- telephoning both routinely and when their child was having problems.

Findings

Poverty had a clear negative relationship to student achievement. On the average, the students in this sample scored below the national average, and below students in urban districts, in all years and grades tested. Students in the highest poverty schools had the lowest scores.

Test scores in math between third and fifth grade grew at a 40 percent higher rate for low-achieving students in schools whose teachers reported high levels of parent outreach compared with students in schools whose teachers reported low levels of parent outreach.

The study found that reading achievement improved faster when two factors were present:

- Teachers gave high ratings to their professional development in reading. The growth in student test scores between grades three and five was about 20 percent greater when teachers rated their professional development high than when they gave it a low rating.
- Third-grade teachers were especially active in outreach to parents of low-achieving students. Growth in test scores between grades 3 and 5 was 50 percent higher for those students whose teachers and schools reported high levels of parent outreach early. This was compared with students whose teachers and schools reported low levels of parent outreach activities in the third grade.

The study found that math achievement improved faster when three factors were present:

- Teachers highly rated their professional development in math. Growth in test scores between third and fifth grades was 50 percent higher for those students whose teachers and schools rated their professional development high than when they gave it a low rating.
- Teachers reported high levels of outreach to parents of students who initially showed low achievement. Test scores in math between third and fifth grade grew at a 40 percent higher rate for low-achieving students in schools whose teachers reported high levels of parent outreach compared with students in schools whose teachers reported low levels of parent outreach.
- Instructional practices involved students in more exploration in the upper grades. Growth in test scores between third and fifth grades was about 17 percent greater for students whose fifth-grade teachers reported very high usage of exploration in instruction compared with students whose teachers reported low usage.

Conclusions

> The study's findings lend some support to the policy position that a framework, including standards, assessments, and professional development, can improve student achievement when teachers are engaged with that framework . . . Outreach to parents of low-achieving students was of long-term benefit to reading achievement for all students and to mathematics achievement for low-achieving students . . . All these conditions could combine to help mitigate the serious negative effects of poverty, at both the student and the school levels, on achievement." (Executive Summary, p. 18)

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Williams, Deborah Bugg (1998) ED420401

Parent Involvement Gender Effects on Preadolescent Student Performance
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA

Summary: Using a large, long-term national database (NELS: 88), this study examines the effect of parent involvement on the achievement of about 14,000 middle-grade students. It found that parents' educational expectations and out-of-school activities are positively linked to all measures of their children's achievement. These effects occur in all pairings of parents with sons and daughters.

In their first 18 years, children spend 87 percent of their waking time outside school in their parents' charge. How parents direct this time can have major effects on student achievement.

In their first 18 years, children spend 87 percent of their waking time outside school in their parents' charge. How parents direct this time can have major effects on student achievement. Because of major changes in society, the roles of mothers and fathers have changed. For example, more mothers work during the day and more fathers have closer relationships with their children. This study assesses the effect of parents' gender on both boys' and girls' performance in school. It also considers how parents' roles change as their children enter the preteen years.

Williams modified Herbert Walberg's model of educational productivity to develop three factors:

- **Parent effort**: contacts with school, expectations of student, and discussions with student.
- **Instruction**: how much time student spends learning outside school.
- **Environment**: support for learning at home, quality of school (parent rating), knowing student's friends, and out-of-school activities.

Measures of achievement include male and female students' math and reading test scores, GPA, and motivation (reported being willing to work hard at learning). Williams related information about parents' and students' gender to student achievement. She used multiple regression analyses to control for factors such as family income, education and background, type of school district, and family structure.

Findings

This study, like much previous research, finds that parents' educational expectations and out-of-school activities are positively linked to all measures of their children's achievement. These effects occur in all gender pairs (father-son, father-daughter, mother-son, and mother-daughter). Mothers and fathers have varying effects, however, on their sons' and daughters' academic performance. For example, mothers' involvement is more strongly related to math and reading achievement for both sons and daughters. Fathers' involvement also has an effect, but it is not as significant.

Parent involvement at school also has an effect, but it appears to be a marker for other more important factors. In other words, when parents are involved in their children's schools, they tend to share other activities with their children as well. Fathers' involvement in their child's school is as important for achievement as is mothers' involvement.

Conclusions

Williams concludes that parent involvement programs should be designed to increase the ways that fathers and mothers interact with their sons and daughters about academic achievement. "Parents are an untapped resource and their parent-child interactions can be altered to enhance in-school performance" (p. 10).

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Wilson, Bruce, and Corbett, H. Dickson (2000)

"I Didn't Know I Could Do That": Parents Learning to Be Leaders through the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership
Lexington, KY: Comonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership
http://www.cip.org/pubs.html
and

Kroll, Janet, Sexton, Robert F., Raimondo, Beverly N., Corbett, H. Dickson, and Wilson, Bruce (2001)

Setting the Stage for Success: Bringing Parents into Education Reform as Advocates for Higher Student Achievement (summary version)
Philadelphia, PA: Pew Charitable Trusts
http://www.Pewtrusts.com/pdf/edu_prichard.pdf

Summary: Wilson and Corbett's evaluation and the Kroll et al. summary report look at a statewide parent-training program sponsored by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky. They found that parents can be agents for change, not just in the education of their own children but of all children. Institute participants became both sophisticated learners about school reform in Kentucky and resourceful leaders in making sure that positive changes for students occurred.

The purpose of this study was to provide the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Prichard Committee with information about the impact of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL). CIPL is a parent leadership training program offered across the state of Kentucky. The institute is designed to help parents understand how the state's education reform law works and how to use the law to press for better results in their schools. The six-day curriculum covers advocacy, action planning, engaging other parents, effective communications with teachers and school staff, and how to conduct meetings.

The researchers conducted surveys and interviews in three waves. First they sent surveys to all CIPL fellows in the classes of 1998 and 1999. Then they interviewed a sample of fellows from three regions (urban, suburban, and rural). Questions covered their motivation to become involved, activities they carried out, what helped and hindered their work, and the support they received from the institute. Third, the researchers interviewed principals to learn about the communities where these fellows work, the kinds of activities they carried out, and the schools' reactions.

Findings

CIPL-trained parent leaders developed projects to do things like

- making schools more welcoming to parents.
- easing students' transitions between schools.
- promoting literacy skills of both adults and children.
- boosting schools' technology resources.

- encouraging schools to examine achievement and attendance data for clues about pressing needs.
- bringing teachers and parents together to discuss mutual hopes for their schools.

Out of 800 participants, more than 350 are members of school-based decision-making councils or other school committees and 18 have been elected to local school boards. Over 50 percent have completed projects in their schools.

Data from the evaluation activities found that the Commonwealth Institute proved itself to be an effective vehicle for

- arming parents with valuable information about how schools should and do operate.
- instilling confidence in themselves as credible educational stakeholders.
- giving them a willingness to act on the behalf of all students, not just their own.

Out of 800 participants, more than 350 are members of school-based decision-making councils or other school committees and 18 have been elected to local school boards. Over 50 percent have completed projects in their schools. In addition, a high proportion of CIPL fellows surveyed are using key skills to improve student achievement in their schools.

Table 23. Proportion of Fellows Carrying Out Skills Either "Often" or "Very Often" (n = 159)

Skill	% of Fellow
Reading materials related to improving student achievement	62
Seeking advice from other parents about school-improvement activities	51
Working with the principal on school-improvement activities	45
Working in parent groups on improving student achievement	43
Moving forward on a school-improvement project	43
Working with teachers on activities to improve student achievement	35
Designing improvement programs for the school	33
Making public presentations about school-improvement activities	20

Half the survey respondents had served on PTA boards, 40 percent on school councils, and 5 percent on school boards. Wilson and Corbett caution that their research does not show if any of this service was influenced by CIPL involvement. They state that they would not make any casual argument, though there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that they were now more comfortable in leadership roles.

Conclusions

> Knowledge, confidence, and willingness were the primary indicators of the program's success. In truth, these fell short of the Institute's original intention, which was to have the parents directly and measurably affect student achievement. In practice, it became apparent that it was most reasonable to expect parents to take actions that had a logical, rather than a causal connection to student achievement, mostly because it is statistically impossible to tease out the relative effects of a single initiative on student learning. (Executive Summary, p. 12)

Appendix: Looking Back—A Brief History and Key Studies, 1974–95

A Brief History of the Research, 1974–95

With the exception of a few seminal studies, this review of the research covers only the last few years, from 1995 to 2002. To understand more fully what the new studies have to tell us, we need to understand the 30-year base on which they build. As in many fields, much groundbreaking work was done in the early phases. In general, these studies fell into three groups:

1. Studies that evaluate the effects of programs and other interventions

- Early childhood and preschool programs that give low-income families information and skills to work with their children at home and collaborate with teachers at school
- Programs to help elementary, and sometimes middle, schools to work more closely with families in improving achievement
- Programs based in schools or the community to give students additional academic support and to assist their families with social services

2. Studies that look at the ways families are involved with their children's learning

- The relationship between family background (family income, education, occupation ethnicity, and culture) and student achievement
- The differences between how families of lower- and higher-performing children are engaged in their learning
- The ways parents are involved at home (monitoring homework and time use, talking about school, and planning for the future) and at school (attending events, meeting with teachers, and volunteering) and their effects on student performance

3. Studies that look at how families and schools interact

- Class and cultural mismatch, and what happens when student and family behavior does not fit the culture of the school
- Studies of high-performing schools and how they engage families
- Studies of effective practice to engage families of diverse backgrounds in improving achievement

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Key Questions

One way to look at the earlier research is to consider the questions it was trying to answer. Going back to the 1960s War on Poverty, Edward Zigler and other founders of Head Start asked about the damaging effects of poverty on young children.

Question 1. Could a preschool program designed to enrich early education and engage families in learning help poor children to overcome the disadvantages of poverty?

This triggered a wave of studies on Head Start and the development of related programs for young children and families. Some, like High Scope, are based at program sites; others, such as Family As Teachers, reach families through home visits. Several studies document lasting effects for children who have taken part in these programs.

- Urie Brofenbrenner's review (1974) found that home-visiting programs that teach mothers to use learning materials had effects that last well into elementary school. This approach was more effective than preschool programs with low parent involvement.
- Schweinhart and Weikart (1992) studied the Perry Preschool Program, which includes parent education and outreach. Compared with a control group, the preschool graduates at age 19 were far more likely to have graduated from high school and be employed.
- Irving Lazar's study of Head Start graduates (1978) also found positive effects through high school. The effects were strongest for students who had attended programs with high parent involvement.

Would this approach work in elementary school as well? After reviewing findings on Head Start, Ira Gordon and others wondered if the concept could be carried into elementary school. Out of this question came the Follow Through program, another federal effort to improve school success for low-income children. Gordon (1979) divided parent involvement into three models:

- Parent Impact Model: The influence of parents and the home on a child's learning
- School Impact Model: Direct parent involvement in the school, from volunteering to serving on governing councils
- Community Impact Model: Parent involvement in all possible ways, from teacher at home to active member of the local community

Gordon concluded that the more comprehensive and long-lasting the parent involvement is—in all roles rather than focused on one or two—the more effective it is likely to be. He found that the effects are evident not only in children's achievement, but also in the quality of schools that serve the community. This framework has influenced much of the thinking about programs to engage families in improving student achievement, such as James Comer's School Development Program (Comer and Haynes, 1992).

Many studies of parent education and other programs to engage families during the elementary school years found positive results. Joyce Epstein's many studies on teacher

practices to involve families in homework show positive results (Epstein 1991; Dauber and Epstein, 1993). Hazel Leler's review (1987) of 48 studies on programs to engage families found that "the fuller the participation of parents, the more effective the results" on student achievement (p. 173).

The landmark study of James Coleman and his colleagues, Equality of Educational Opportunity (1966), gathered a huge amount of data on schools and student achievement, by race and family background, including income and education level. Researchers mined this data base for years. One key finding was that family background, not school, seemed to have the greater effect on student achievement. This prompted another important question:

Question 2. Do public schools actually realize their goal to equalize opportunity for students from all racial and economic backgrounds? Or do they maintain the inequalities in society? In other words, does family background determine achievement, or can schools make a difference?

This question triggered another group of studies that addressed how far family socioeconomic status (SES) determines student performance. SES represents a cluster of factors, such as mother's education, family income, and father's occupation. If we look just at SES and achievement, we see a strong connection. Children's grades, test scores, graduation rates, and college attendance increase with each level of education that their mothers have completed.

The real question is why? The answer seems to be that in better-educated and wealthier families, children get more opportunities to learn and parents are more involved in their learning. Eva Eagle's study (1989) looked at whether family practices, not income and education, predict achievement. Using data from a large national study, she found that high school students from families with higher SES are more likely to graduate and attend college. When she looked at higher-achieving students from all SES levels, however, she found that their parents did the same things: They talked to the teachers, helped students plan for further education, and monitored their school work.

Reginald Clark's classic study, *Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail* (1983), and his later research on family time use, confirm these findings. Comparing practices in families with high-achieving students with those in low-achieving families, Clark found clear differences. His findings, and additional research by Herbert Walberg, Benjamin Bloom, Lawrence Steinberg, Catherine Snow, and many others, describe activities in families where children are doing well in school:

- Establishing a daily family routine.
- Monitoring out-of-school activities.
- Showing the value of learning, self-discipline, and hard work.
- Expressing high expectations for their children's achievement.
- Encouraging children's progress in school.
- Reading, writing, and having discussions among family members.

Thomas Kellaghan and his colleagues, in their book *Home Environment and School Learning* (1993), concluded:

> The socioeconomic level or cultural background of a home need not determine how well a child does at school. Parents from a variety of cultural backgrounds and with different levels of education, income, or occupational status can and do provide stimulating home environments that support and encourage their children's learning. It is what parents do in the home rather than their status that is important. (p. 145)

Despite this knowledge, however, children from poor families still tend to fall behind in school. Even low-income students whose families provide a strong home learning base do not do as well in school, on the average, as middle-class students. This prompted another key question:

Question 3. Is there a class and cultural mismatch between schools and low-income, culturally diverse families? Could this create barriers to constructive family engagement with schools around children's learning?

During the 1980s, James Coleman developed the concept of social capital to explain the importance of social relationships to the health of society. In contrast to financial capital (money and assets) or human capital (a person's intellectual skills), social capital is the value created by social skills and connections. In their study of public and private high schools (1987), Coleman and Hoffer found that low-income students in Catholic schools performed a grade level higher than comparable public school students. The authors speculate the reason lies in the relationship between families and schools. Public schools see themselves as an instrument of society, intended to free children from the constraints of their family background. In Catholic schools, however, parents and educators create a functional community around shared values.

Annette Lareau has also examined how differences in social capital influence how parents relate to school and support their children's learning. In a 1987 study comparing schools serving middle-class and working-class white families, she found striking contrasts. Middle-class parents are more comfortable dealing with teachers, use the same words, and share the same manners. They also have the time, money, and resources to be active at school. Working-class parents had to struggle to get transportation and childcare, and their encounters with teachers were strained and awkward. A more recent Lareau study of how schools relate to white and African-American families is included in this review.

Baker and Stevenson (1986) compared how middle- and working-class mothers handled their eighth graders' transition to high school. In the complex U.S. education system, they noted, the way that families manage their children's schooling can have a major impact on achievement. All the mothers were actively involved, but the strategies they used were different. In general, middle-class mothers:

- Knew more about their children's progress in school.
- Had more contact with the school and teachers.
- Steered their children toward higher-level courses.

In a study of South Asian families, Mitrsomwang and Hawley (1993) found that, contrary to stereotype, not all Asian children did well in school. The families needed to provide these key supports for their children before they performed well:

- Hold strong, consistent values about the importance of education.
- Be willing to help children with schoolwork and be in contact with the school.
- Be able to help children with schoolwork and communicate effectively with teachers and administrators.

James Comer and others pressed the question further. What could schools do about this problem? How can public education add value, so that children who are at risk of falling behind get what they need to forge ahead?

Question 4. What would it take to raise the achievement of low-income children and children of diverse backgrounds to the levels we expect for white middle-class children? Should engaging their families be part of a concerted strategy to reduce or eliminate the achievement gap?

Susan Swap (1993) developed a helpful, four-part typology of home-school relationships, based on Joyce Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence. (Epstein's spheres are family, school, and community. Ideally, the three should overlap around a child to provide balanced support.) The types are based on the school's stance toward families:

1. **Protective model**: school enforces strict separation between parents and educators.
2. **Transmission model**: school sends home one-way communications.
3. **Curriculum enrichment model**: parents contribute their knowledge and skills to the school.
4. **Partnership model**: teachers and family members work together to help all children learn.

Swap's research and other studies she reviewed confirm that the partnership approach yields the greatest return. Unlike the curriculum enrichment strategy, where they are confined to certain settings, parents are involved in all aspects of school life. They volunteer in the classroom, tutor students, serve on school councils, and make connections with community groups.

James Comer's School Development Program is a good example of the partnership model. Developed by Comer, a psychologist, and his colleagues at the Yale Child Study Center, the approach was pioneered in New Haven. Parents sit on the school management team and help develop a total school plan for improvement. They also sit on all committees and develop close working relationship with teachers. "Children learn from people they bond to," is Comer's guiding principle.

In his article "Educating Poor Minority Children," Comer (1988) says: "The failure to bridge the social and cultural gap between home and school may lie at the root of the poor academic performance of many of these (poor, minority) children" (p. 3). If the key to raising achievement is to promote children's psychological development, and

encourage bonding to the school, the school must promote positive relations between families and staff. Comer's research on the New Haven Schools where SDP began and on other schools that have fully adopted the program showed steady gain compared with other schools in the districts (Comer, 1988; Comer and Haynes, 1992).

In a provocative review, Jim Cummins (1986) proposed a framework for changing the relationship between families and schools so that all children would have a better chance to succeed. Citing research by John Ogbu, he points out that minority groups with low status tend to perform below standard. This is because they have taken to heart the inferiority that others assign to them. For example, the Burakumin people in Japan do as poorly in school there as low-income African Americans do in the United States. Yet when they attend school in the United States, they excel as often as other Asians.

The central principle of Cummins's framework is that students from "dominated" groups can do well in school if they are empowered, rather than disabled, by their relationships with educators. According to Cummins, schools that empower students of color do these things:

- The students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program.
- Family and community participation is an essential part of children's education.
- Children are motivated to use language actively and to gain knowledge for their own use, not because others tell them to do it.
- Educators are advocates for students, rather then label them as having problems.

Given the importance of engaging families in the design and development of programs to improve their children's achievement, Don Davies, Joyce Epstein, and other researchers looked at how to make this happen.

Question 5. How can connections be strengthened among schools, families, and community institutions to support children as they proceed from infancy through high school?

From 1990 through 1996, the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, a consortium of several universities and the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) funded by the federal Office of Educational Research and Improvement, addressed this question. Center studies were grounded in the ideas of shared responsibility and partnership. The center, which ceased operations in 1996, was co-directed by Joyce Epstein and Don Davies.

Most of the studies took a developmental approach, seeking to learn how practices change for:

- children at different ages, grades, and various levels of maturity.
- parents at various points in the life course.
- educators at different school and grade levels.
- community leaders at different points in their institution's histories.

The center also looked at how practices can be responsive and appropriate for children, families, schools, and communities with different histories, strengths, and needs. Joyce Epstein's six-part typology provided an important tool for analysis in many of the 35 studies and projects by about 30 researchers. These studies are available through Epstein's current Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships at Johns Hopkins University. The Web site is www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/listsab.htm.

Key topics for study included:

- Family support: parent and family centers in schools, integrated services, and family literacy
- Early childhood: the role of nurturing adults in the development of young children, and common roadblocks for young children to later academic success
- Relationships with diverse communities: the influence of different ethnic and cultural family backgrounds in children's development and learning
- Community support systems: connections with families of infants and toddlers, coaching as an alternative to mentoring in the community, and natural support systems in low-income communities
- Family and school communications: family practices that contribute to school success, parent-teacher action research to foster school change, and developing parent involvement in high schools
- Staff development: the education and training of professionals and others who develop and conduct programs of partnership

In their study of teacher-family communication, Carol Ames and her colleagues (1993) looked at parent evaluations of the teacher, their sense of comfort with the school, and their reported level of involvement in their children's learning. All were higher when parents received frequent and effective communications. The study evaluated communication by 35 teachers with a control group for comparison, using careful statistical analysis.

Lorri Connors (1993) evaluated a Maryland family literacy program to help both parents and children improve literacy skills. She found that both the children and participating adults improved their math and reading skills. Preschool children improved their scores on all of the literacy tests given, particularly letter identification. Parents changed their home environments to support their children's education. They also held higher expectations for their children's educational achievement. Parents who attended the most sessions had the greatest gain in skills.

Connors and Epstein did pioneering research on parent involvement in high schools. Their report (1994) of a large-scale survey in Maryland concludes:

1. There is a shared vision of partnership, and urban, suburban, and rural high schools are remarkably similar in their goals for partnership.
2. Families need and want better information about high schools and about their teens' programs.

3. Schools should provide activities in the middle grades to prepare students and their families for the transition to high school.
4. Students need and want to be part of the partnership.
5. Some students and families are particularly isolated from their schools and communities and disconnected from each other.
6. High schools can develop and implement more comprehensive programs to inform and involve families across the grades.

IRE conducted a five-year parent-teacher action research project in eight schools in five states (Palanki et al., 1995). The report concludes that by using parent-teacher action research, these schools developed strong parent-teacher communication and collaborations in:

- educational planning and assessment for students,
- schoolwide educational decision making, and
- curriculum development and assessment.

Although it is often a difficult and slow process, parent-teacher action research can be an effective tool for school and community renewal. It is also a way to make school reform more responsive to the needs of children and families.

Major Findings

The themes that emerged from these flagship studies were highlighted in the Henderson and Berla review, *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement* (1994).

- **The family makes critical contributions to student achievement, from early childhood through high school.** Efforts to improve children's performance in school are much more effective if they encompass their families. Regardless of income level or education background, all families can—and often do—support their children's success.
- **When parents are involved both at home and at school, children do better in school, and they stay in school longer.** Teachers have higher expectations of students whose parents are involved at school. And when parents are involved at school, they tend to become more active in the community and continue their own education.
- **When parents are involved at school, the school as a whole gets better.** Large-scale studies of schools in similar neighborhoods found that schools that are more open to families and the community have higher average achievement.
- **Children do best when parents can play a variety of parts in children's learning.** These should range from helping at home and volunteering at school, to working with the school to help their children succeed and making key decisions about the school program.
- **The more the relationship between families and the school is a real partnership, the higher the student achievement.** Studies that relate levels of parent involvement to improvements in student achievement find that the more parents are involved, the

better students do. When families are engaged, rather than labeled as problems, schools can be transformed from places where only certain students prosper to ones where all children do well.

- **Families, schools, and community groups all contribute to student achievement. The best results come when all three work together.** As Clark points out, a key difference between high- and low-achieving children is how they spend their time outside school. Community groups offer important resources for students and families, and schools can provide a critical link.

Brief Summaries of Key Studies, 1974–95

Ames, Carol, with M. Khoju and T. Watkins (1993)

"The Effects of School-to-Home-to-School Communication on Children's Motivation and Learning" in *Parent Involvement: The Relationship between School-to-Home Communication and Parents' Perceptions and Beliefs*
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

This study looked at parent evaluations of the teacher, their sense of comfort with the school, and their reported level of involvement in their children's learning. All were higher when parents received frequent and effective communications. The study evaluated communication by 35 teachers with a control group for comparison, using careful statistical analysis.

Baker, David P., and David L. Stevenson (1986) EJ340568

Mothers' Strategies for Children's School Achievement: Managing the Transition to High School
Sociology of Education, 59, 1986, 156–166

In this study of 41 families with eighth graders, the authors explore the relationship between family socioeconomic status (SES) and children's academic achievement by examining actions parents take to manage their child's school career. Although both low- and high-SES parents are aware of useful strategies, high-SES parents are more likely to take active steps to assure their children will enroll in postsecondary education.

Bronfenbrenner, Urie (1974) ED093501

A Report on Longitudinal Evaluations of Preschool Programs, Vol. II: Is Early Intervention Effective?
Office of Child Development, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

This paper analyzes several studies of different educational intervention programs for disadvantaged preschool children. It found that children attending early educational intervention programs show higher and more-lasting gains if their mothers are actively involved in their learning.

Clark, Reginald M. (1983)

Family Life and School Achievement: Why Poor Black Children Succeed or Fail
Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

This is an intensely focused study of 10 poor black families and their high school children. The author found that a family's overall cultural style—not marital status, educational level, income, or social surroundings—determines whether children are prepared for competent performance at school.

Coleman, James S., and Thomas Hoffer (1987)

Public and Private High Schools: The Impact of Communities
New York, NY: Basic Books, Inc.

In this continuation of their 1982 study, the authors find that students in private and Catholic high schools perform better than students from comparable backgrounds in public schools. They speculate that the critical difference lies in the relationship of schools to the communities they serve.

Comer, James P. (1988)

Educating Poor Minority Children
Scientific American, 259(5), 42–48, November 1988

This article describes a long-term program to transform two chronically low-achieving inner-city New Haven elementary schools, partly by including massive parent involvement. The schools achieved dramatic, lasting gains in student academic success.

Comer, James P., and Norris M. Haynes (1992)

Summary of School Development Program Effects
New Haven, CT: Yale Child Study Center

This paper summarizes evaluation findings on the School Development Program (SDP) developed by Comer. At three sites, Benton Harbor, MI, Prince George's County, MD, and New Haven, CT, researchers found that, compared with control groups, students in the predominantly low-income SDP elementary and middle schools improved in four areas. These were academic performance in reading and math, behavior and adjustment to school, self-concept, and positive ratings of classroom climate.

Connors, Lorri J. (1993)

Project Self-Help: A Family Focus on Literacy
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

This is an evaluation of a Maryland family literacy program to help both parents and children improve literacy skills. The author found that both the children and participating adults improved their math and reading skills.

Cummins, Jim (1986) EJ330827

Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention
Harvard Educational Review, 56(1), February 1986

Citing programs that have been successful in promoting achievement of minority group students, the author proposes a theoretical framework for changing the relationship between educators and students. The framework includes substantial family and community participation.

Dauber, Susan, and Joyce Epstein (1993)

Parent Attitudes and Practices of Involvement in Inner-City Elementary and Middle Schools
In Chavkin, Nancy Feyl, ed., *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society,* Chapter 2, 53–71
Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

This is a report on a survey of 2,317 inner-city elementary and middle school parents. The authors found that the level of parent involvement is directly linked to the specific practices that schools and teachers use to encourage involvement at school and to guide parents in how to help their children at home. The authors also assert that parents who are more involved tend to have children who perform better in school.

Eagle, Eva (1989) ED307332

Socioeconomic Status, Family Structure, and Parental Involvement: The Correlates of Achievement
Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, March 27–31, 1989

This study assesses the varying effects of SES, parent attention, mother's working patterns, and family structure on high school student achievement. Although parent education level and income are associated with higher achievement, when SES is controlled, only parent involvement during high school had a significant positive impact.

Epstein, Joyce L. (1991)

Effects on Student Achievement of Teachers' Practices of Parental Involvement
Advances in Reading/Language Research, 5, 261–276
Greenwich, CT: JAI Press

This study looks at student achievement in the classrooms of 14 elementary school teachers who used varying techniques to involve parents in learning activities at home. The author found a positive and significant effect on student reading achievement.

Epstein, Joyce L., and Lorri J. Connors (1994)

Trust Fund: School, Family, and Community Partnerships in High Schools
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, and Schools & Children's Learning

This report of a large-scale survey of Maryland high schools found that urban, suburban, and rural high schools have remarkably similar goals for partnership. The authors also found that families want and need more information and activities to prepare students for the transition to high school.

Gordon, Ira (1979)

The Effects of Parent Involvement on Schooling
In Brandt, Ronald S., ed., *Partners: Parents and Schools*
Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

This review of pertinent research indicates that the more comprehensive and long-lasting the parent involvement, the more effective it is likely to be, not just on children's achievement but on the quality of schools as institutions serving the community.

Guinagh, Barry, and Ira Gordon (1976) ED135469

School Performance as a Function of Early Stimulation
Florida University at Gainesville, Institute for Development of Human Resources

This is a long-term study of an early childhood parent-education project training low-income mothers to use learning materials at home. The program produced significant advances in reading and math tests when the children entered school. These advantages were maintained into the fourth grade.

Henderson, Anne T., and Nancy Berla (1994)

A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement
Washington, DC: Center for Law and Education

This is a review of 64 studies on parent involvement and student achievement. Taken together, the studies strongly suggest that when parents are involved in their children's education at home, their children do better in school. When parents are involved at school, their children go farther in school, and the schools they go to become better. Programs to improve achievement are more likely to have positive results if they engage families.

Kellaghan, Thomas, Kathryn Sloane, Benjamin Alvarez, and Benjamin S. Bloom (1993)

The Home Environment & School Learning: Promoting Parental Involvement in the Education of Children
San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

This book reviews a large body of research and finds that the home environment is a powerful factor in determining the academic success of students—their level of achievement, their interest in learning, and the years of schooling they will complete. The authors also outline a program parents can use at home to support their children's scholastic development.

Lareau, Annette (1987) EJ353123

Social class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital
Sociology of Education, 60, April 1987, 73–85

This study compares family-school relationships in a middle-class versus a working-class elementary school. It finds that the differences in the way parents respond to teacher requests and interact with the school may explain the lower achievement, aspirations, and life prospects of working-class children.

Lazar, Irving, and Richard B. Darlington (1978) ED175523

Lasting Effects after Preschool
Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, Cornell University

This is a long-term study of 11 early-childhood projects involving parents. It shows that participating children performed better in school and had significantly fewer assignments to special-education classes or grade retentions than control-group children for many years after they completed the projects.

Leler, Hazel (1987)

Parent Education and Involvement in Relation to the Schools and to Parents of School-Aged Children
In Haskins and Adams, eds., *Parent Education and Public Policy*
Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.

This is an extensive and rigorous review of 48 studies of educational programs with parent involvement. It finds that the fuller the participation of parents, the more effective the results.

Mitrsomwang, Suparvadee, and Willis Hawley (1993)

Cultural 'Adaptation' and the Effects of Family Values and Behaviors on the Academic Achievement and Persistence of Indochinese Students
Washington, DC: Final Report to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education, Grant No. R 117E 00045

This study examines the experiences and attitudes of Indochinese families in Nashville, TN. The researchers found that strong family values and behaviors related to education, not just cultural and religious beliefs, had a positive influence on their high school students' performance at school.

Palanki, Ameetha, and Patricia Burch, with Don Davies (1995)

In Our Hands: A Multi-Site Parent-Teacher Action Research Project
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning

This is a report on a parent-teacher action research project in eight sites. It found that all sites developed strong parent-teacher communication and collaborations. The authors concluded that parent-teacher action research can be an effective tool for school and community renewal.

Phillips, Susan D, Michael C. Smith, and John F. Witted (1985)

Parents and Schools: Staff Report to the Study Commission on the Quality of Education in the Metropolitan Milwaukee Schools
Milwaukee, WI

This is a study of 22 school districts in the metropolitan Milwaukee area. It finds that parent involvement is associated with higher school performance regardless of the income level of families served or the grade level or location of the school.

Schweinhart, Lawrence J., and David P. Weikart (1992)

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, Similar Studies, and Their Implications for Public Policy in the U.S.
In Stegelin, Dolores A., ed., *Early Childhood Education: Policy Issues for the 1990's,* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation

This paper reviews studies of high-quality preschool programs that work with families, and finds significant social, academic, and economic benefits over the long term for students. The authors estimate that a national investment in quality childcare programs for all children would yield a net return of $31.6 billion each year, from reduced costs for social services and criminal justice, and from increases in productivity and tax revenues.

Snow, Catherine E., Wendy S. Barnes, Jean Chandler, Irene F. Goodman, and Lowry Hemphill (1991)

Unfulfilled Expectations: Home and School Influences on Literacy
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

This book describes a study of home and school influences on literacy achievement among children from low-income families. It found that the single variable most positively connected to all literacy skills was formal parent-school involvement.

Swap, Susan McAllister (1993)

Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concepts to Practice
New York, NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University

In this book, the author describes four models of home-school relationships. Swap makes a persuasive case for the partnership model, based on a literature review, some exploratory data, and extensive observations. She also provides helpful examples and suggestions for putting the model into practice.

Walberg, Herbert J. (1984)

"Families as Partners in Educational Productivity"
Phi Delta Kappan, February 1984, 397–400

In this article summarizing findings from over 2,500 studies on learning, Walberg concludes that an academically stimulating home environment is one of eight chief determinants of learning. From 29 recent studies he concludes that the home learning environment has an effect on achievement that is three times as large as family SES.

White, Karl R., Matthew J. Taylor, and Vanessa D. Moss (1992)

Does Research Support Claims About the Benefits of Involving Parents in Early Intervention Programs?
Review of Educational Research, 62(1), Spring 1992, 91–125

This is an analysis of 193 studies of programs for disadvantaged and handicapped children whose parents were trained to teach their preschoolers developmental skills. The authors suggest that because so few studies were well designed, the evidence that such involvement benefits the children is not convincing.

About the Authors and Publisher

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Southwest Educational Development Laboratory SEDL is a private nonprofit education research and development corporation based in Austin, Texas. SEDL exists to challenge, support, and enrich educational systems in providing quality education for all learners, enabling them to lead productive and fulfilling lives in an ever-changing, increasingly connected world. The corporation holds the contract for one of the 10 regional educational laboratories in the United States funded by the U.S. Department of Education. SEDL's regional educational laboratory serves Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.

In December 2000, SEDL and its partner, the Charles A. Dana Center at The University of Texas, created the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools as a result of a contract award from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE). The Center serves as a national resource to schools, community groups, research organizations, policymakers, and families. The Center creates bridges between research and practice—linking people with research-based information and resources they can use to effectively connect schools, families, and communities.

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